













RAMMOHUN ROY

From a Portrait by  
H. P. Briggs, R. A.





# RAMMOHUN ROY

A STUDY OF HIS  
LIFE, WORKS  
AND THOUGHTS

*By*

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## PREFACE

Rajah Rammohun Roy left this world hundred years ago and we are to-day celebrating the first Centenary of the event. His death in a foreign land where he went for a short visit has deprived us of all the details of his life, which could have helped us in constructing a genuine biography and in forming a true estimate of his services to the country and to humanity. A full sketch of his life has not yet appeared and a large portion of the materials which could have thrown further light have not been studied. The story of his life as given by Nagendra-nath Chatterjee and later on by Sophia Dobson Collet has to be revised in view of recent discoveries of facts which were not known by them. In this connection Mr. Brajendranath Banerji has rendered invaluable services by unearthing many old documents. There are still many more materials lying in the archives and record rooms. We hope the undiscovered documents will be brought out by some earnest seekers of truth and the figure of the great leader of Modern India will be held up before us in a clear perspective. I have tried to form an estimate of the contributions of Rammohun with the materials available. This study I very respectfully offer to the memory of Rammohun on the occasion of the Centenary of his death. I hope this will help the younger generation of Indians to approach him in a spirit of reverence.

I must acknowledge here the help I have received from many friends in writing this book. Dr. S. K. Datta, Principal of the Forman Christian College, Lahore,

kindly gave me a number of rare books in his possession. The Rev. Mr. Angus, Principal of the Serampore College, gave me all facilities for looking up into the old volumes of the *Friend of India* and other books and magazines in the library of the College. Mr. Ramananda Chatterjee, Editor of the *Modern Review* has put me under obligation by lending a few blocks. I was very substantially helped by my pupil and friend, Mr. Amal Home, Editor of the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, who not only supplied me with many books and documents he had for editing the Centenary booklet but helped me in many other ways.

Calcutta,  
September 27, 1933.

U. N. BALL

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*Rammohan Roy*

[ From a pencil-sketch after a steel-engraving frontispiece in "Researches into the Physical History of Mankind" by Dr. James Cowles Prichard ]



# RAMMOHUN ROY

## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY LIFE

*Thy Nation sat in darkness, for night  
Of pagan gloom was o'er it;—Thou wast born  
Midst superstition's ignorance forlorn:  
Yet in thy breast there glowed a heavenly light  
Of purest truth and love; and to thy sight  
Appeared the day-star of approaching morn.*

—MARY CARPENTER.

“ WE shall not surely be charged with using the language of exaggeration, if we declare that, among the philanthropists and reformers to whom alone the title of ‘Great’,—too often lavished on tyrants, heroes and conquerors, for building their aggrandisement on the prostration of their species,—should be confined and kept sacred, and who alone should monopolize all the places in the temple of fame,—a high place must unquestionably be assigned to Rammohun Roy. With an energy which set at nought the formidable resistance he encountered from the slaves of bigotry—with a perseverance which was unwearing—with a moral courage



which triumphed over persecution—with a benevolence which was not exclusive but catholic—with a religious aspiration, which was fervid and impassioned but not impulsive and fanatical—he laboured, according to the light and knowledge he enjoyed, to liberate the Hindu mind from the tyranny of superstition, and to inoculate it with the elevating principle of a more rational faith."

This was the estimate of a writer in the *Calcutta Review* in 1845. The name of Rammohun Roy is associated with a great revolution in India. He has been called the Maker of Modern India. If anybody really deserves this title, it is certainly this child born in a village in Western Bengal in the year 1772, the year in which the East India Company assumed the direct government of Bengal and Behar by abolishing the Dual System.

The ancestors of Rammohun Roy had originally come from Kanauj. His remote ancestor was the great Bhattanarayan of Sandilya Gotra (clan), who migrated to Eastern Bengal long before the advent of the Muhammadans. They lived there for twelve generations. Sanket Bandyopadhyay removed to a village called Brihat Bangalpas and the family stayed there for five generations. In the eighteenth generation from Bhattanarayan, Govinda is said to have come and settled in the village named Benipur in the district of Murshidabad. After several generations Parasuram of this family accepted service under the Nawab of Bengal. He gave up the priestly duties and for services rendered to the Nawab he received the honorific title of Roy. The family has been using this title since then. Parasuram was five generations ahead of Rammohun. His grandson Krishnachandra was deputed by Nawab Azimussan to Raja Jagat Roy of Burdwan to help in the collection of revenue from some recalcitrant persons in his estate. The Raja of Burdwan had taken on *ijara* (lease) the Zamindari of Burdwan and he in his turn had granted

the right of collection to sub-tenure-holders. One such person was Anant Ram Chaudhury of Khanakul-Krishnanagar. He was a man of the type of the unruly barons and was very irregular in his payments. It was a very difficult task for the Raja to fulfil his contract with the Nawab and he asked for the services of a competent man from the Nawab to force his subordinate Ijaradars to pay the revenue in time. On the recommendation of his Minister, Bhabananda Roy, the Nawab offered the position of a Sikdar to Krishnachandra Roy, who was conversant with Persian and Urdu and was reputed to be a conscientious and competent man. Krishnachandra was sent to Khanakul-Krishnanagar with a number of Sikh soldiers and he encamped at the village called Goghat in the vicinity of Jahanabad.

He was a devout Brahman and was exceedingly happy when he paid a visit to the temple of the god Gopinath in Krishnanagar. He was charmed at the atmosphere of the place and decided to settle in the village of Radhanagar, opposite Krishnanagar, on the left bank of the river Darakeswar. Khanakul-Krishnanagar has the reputation of being an important place in Rahra (Western Bengal). Many eminent poets and scholars of Bengal were born on the western banks of the Hooghly and their names still adorn the Bengali literature. The society in the vicinity of Khanakul was reputed to be cultured and Brahmans there were honoured everywhere for their love of learning and advocacy of Hindu culture. Krishnachandra Roy while engaged in his official duty as Sikdar came across a learned Brahman named Narayan Bandyopadhyay who greatly impressed him as a pious and a profound scholar. It was at the advice of Narayan Bandyopadhyay that Krishnachandra made up his mind to settle in that locality.

Krishnachandra had three sons, of whom the youngest, Brajabinode was placed in a high position under

Nawab Siraj-ud-Dowla of Murshidabad. In a petition to Lord Minto in 1809 Rammohun Roy referred to his grandfather as having been at various times chief of different districts during the administration of Nawab Mahabat Jung. He acquired riches by his ability and the love and esteem of his countrymen on account of his piety and benevolence. The service under the Nawab, specially of the character of Siraj-ud-Dowla, could not afford security. The courtiers had always to submit to the whims of the wilful ruler and a man possessing a grain of self-respect could not always sacrifice his sense of dignity. Brajabinode left the service of the Nawab in disgust and spent the rest of his life in retirement in the village of Radhanagar. He had seven sons and the fifth Ramkanta was the father of Rammohun. There is a story regarding the marriage of Ramkanta in a Sakta family. While Brajabinode was in his deathbed he was taken to the banks of the Ganges according to the custom of the pious Hindus. There a gentleman anxiously approached the dying Brahman soliciting a favour. This gentleman came of a respectable family of village Chatra near Serampore and Brajabinode could not easily disoblige him. He desired that one of the sons of Brajabinode should marry his daughter. But there was some difficulty in the way. Brajabinode was a pious Baishnava and was not willing to have relations with a Sakta family, specially when Shyam Bhattacharya who asked the boon of this dying man did not retain the purity of Kulins. A Baishnava was inoffensive in his creed, worshipped Visnu or his incarnations and was anxious to attain salvation by seeking the grace of God by devotion. A Sakta, on the other hand, worshipped the deity as energy and sacrificed goats and other animals in the course of his religious ceremonies. The Tantras guided him in his religious duties, whereas the Baishnava took the greatest delight in reading the *Bhagabat* and other Puranas.

There was a constant conflict between the two creeds. A pious Baishnava would not ordinarily ally himself with a Sakta. Brajabinode in the last moments of his life felt that he would not be true to himself if he could not comply with the wishes of a pious Brahman. He sent for all his sons and explained to them his position. All of them excepting Ramkanta declined to agree to the match. But Ramkanta assured his father that he would submit to his last wishes and in due course married Tarini Devi. There were three children of this marriage, first a daughter and then two sons, Jagamohan and Rammohun. Ramkanta had another son through a second wife, and the name of this son was Ramlochan. The daughter was married to a man named Sridhar Mukherjee, and it is said that her son Gurudas Mukherjee was the first to accept the religious views of his uncle, Rammohun.

Rammohun Roy himself wrote about his ancestors in a letter to a friend while in England. In the course of the letter he says:—

“ My ancestors were Brahmins of a high order, and, from time immemorial, were devoted to the religious duties of their race, down to my fifth progenitor, who about one hundred and forty years ago gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandisement. His descendants ever since have followed his example, and according to the usual fate of courtiers, with various success, sometimes rising to honour and sometimes falling; sometimes rich and sometimes poor; sometimes excelling in success, sometimes miserable through disappointment. But my maternal ancestors, being of the sacerdotal order by profession as well as by birth, and of a family than which none holds a higher rank in that profession, have upto the present day uniformly adhered to a life of religious observances and devotion, preferring peace and tranquillity of mind to the excitements of ambition, and all the allurements of worldly grandeur.”

Though she came of a Sakta family Tarini Devi, after her marriage with Ramkanta Roy, thoroughly identified herself with the beliefs and practices of her husband. A Hindu wife considered it a religious duty to observe the rites and customs of the family of adoption and would feel extremely grieved if in any way the traditions of the husband's family were compromised. With all her strength she tried to uphold the honour and dignity of the husband and his family. Tarini Devi was a typical Hindu wife. She was intelligent and possessed the power of clear thinking. Pious in her temperament she never stooped to anything mean and ignoble. She scrupulously adhered to the religious practices of her husband and father-in-law and won the love and affection of all the members of the family on account of her strength of character. There is an interesting story regarding her loyalty to the traditions of her husband's family. Once she went to her father's place with her son Rammohun who was then a mere infant. One day her father Shyam Bhattacharya gave the child a *Bilwa* leaf as a blessing of the goddess he worshipped. When Tarini Devi saw the child chewing the leaf she felt awfully annoyed with her father for compromising the religious creed of her family. The father was offended at the conduct of his daughter and cursed her by saying: "In thy pride thou hast cast away the blessed *Bilwa* leaf; thou canst be never happy with thy son. This son will become an outcaste." The curse thus uttered by her father upset Tarini and she fell prostrate at the feet of her father asking forgiveness. Shyam Bhattacharya assured her that although he was unable to withdraw the curse the child would become an extraordinary man and would receive honour from the highest authorities. Rammohun was brought up according to the religious convictions of his parents and both Ramkanta and Tarini took special care that he followed in the footprints of his ancestors. When they found that all their efforts

proved futile their disappointment was very great. They could not take kindly to the new ideas of their son and resisted with all their strength his programme of reformation. Towards the end of her life, however, the pious lady realised the sincerity of her son and when she left the world to serve her god in the last days of her life in the temple of Jagannath at Puri she assured her son: "Rammohun, you are right in your views. I am but a woman and have become old and cannot give up the idolatrous practices in which I find joy." This was the noble confession of a truly pious soul. In spite of religious differences Rammohun had nothing but great respect for his mother. The character of the great reformer was moulded by his mother from his very infancy. It was from his mother that he acquired firmness in his resolution and nobility in his ideals.

His father Ramkanta had the reputation of an upright man. The way in which he agreed to submit to the last wishes of his dying father shows that he was not a man of ordinary type. He also served the Nawab of Murshidabad as a Sarcar and on retirement from service he lived in Radhanagar. He then took on *ijara* (revenue contract) a few villages, including Khanakul-Krishnanagar from the Burdwan Raj and this proved a cause of constant quarrel between the Raja and the Roy family.

In a petition to Lord Minto, already mentioned, Rammohun described his father as a man of property, who rented a farm from Government, the revenue of which was lakhs of rupees. In the later part of his life he also managed the property of Rani Bishan Kumari, mother of Rajah Tejchand of Burdwan.

The Raja was exacting and did not pay any attention to the difficulties of his subordinates. The troubles became so intolerable to Ramkanta that he ceased to take interest in his worldly duties and would like to spend most of his time in meditation sitting amidst

*Tulsi* plants. The relations with the Burdwan Raj remained bitter for a long time, till Maharaja Mahatab chand made it up with Ramaprosad Roy, the second son of Rammohun Roy. As the Roy family became very extensive Ramkanta left Radhanagar and settled in Langulpara.

It has been already said that the Roys were Baishnavas. They would not worship any other god but Vishnu and as usual with Hindus they had a family deity whom they called Rajrajeswar or Rajadhiraj. It was a piece of stone which was worshipped as a symbol of Vishnu. In the Hindu mythology Vishnu is that aspect of the Divine which preserves the creation. The Roys would not tolerate any other deity and Pandit Mahendranath Vidyanidhi, a member of this family, thinks that the Theism of Rammohun had its origin in this practice of the Roy family. The religious atmosphere in which Rammohun was brought up was highly congenial to the development of his religious views. He acquired from childhood the discipline of worshipping one god and as a logical consequence of this he found the necessity of worshipping One True God as the Governor and Supervisor of the universe.

There is some controversy regarding the date of Rammohun's birth. His horoscope which alone could give the definite information has been destroyed. The early writers mentioned 1774 as the year in which he was born, and this date was accepted by Nagendranath Chatterjee to whose untiring labours we owe a large amount of information. But Miss Collet has put May 22, 1772, as the date of his birth. This was the finding of the Rev. Mr. Dall, an American Unitarian Minister, who lived in India for some time. He had it from Ramaprosad Roy that Rammohun was born in the Bengali month of Jaistha in 1179 B.S., corresponding to May, 1772. This was corroborated by his elder brother

Radhaprosad who had told his nephew Lalit Mohun Chatterjee about the year of his father's birth. It is, therefore, safe to accept the month of May, 1772 as the time of his birth on the evidence of so many persons who are expected to possess reliable information.

### Education.

The system of education at the time was in a state of transition. The East India Company had undertaken the administration of the country but it had not yet drawn up its own line of work. It had to retain as much of the Mughal practices as possible. Persian was the court language and every respectable man in Bengal had to learn Persian if he had any ambition to accept service under the Government or to deal with the rulers. But the vernacular of the province was not neglected. A student picked up the rudiments of knowledge through his vernacular. The elementary education was in the hands of teachers locally known as "Gurumahashays", who generally lived with respectable families and had a number of children to teach. The indigenous system of education was not at all interfered with by the rulers. Well-to-do people appointed these teachers and the benefit of learning was shared by all children of the locality. The boys learnt to read and write and to make the ordinary calculations necessary for household purposes. The system was thus described by a writer in the *Calcutta Review* (1845):

"Rammohun Roy received the first elements of native education at home in accordance with the system, which universally obtains among the upper classes of native society, initiating the children in the mysteries of *Subhankar* under the paternal roof before sending them to a public school. The initiation takes place under the auspices of that model of an educator, a gurumahashay,



who, instead of teaching "the young idea to shoot", takes good care to cramp and check the development of all ideas except such as might be inspired by his example. It must not, however, be supposed that the boys acquire any mastery over the Bengali language. Far from it. They pick up a few rules of arithmetic and letter-writing. They acquire enough of Bengali to enable them to conduct the duties of a sheristadar and a peshkar, but not enough of it to express their thoughts with correctness or elegance. . . . . It is, therefore, obvious that the acquisition of the Bengali language—the language of their infancy—the language, in which their earliest associations are entwined, forms, properly speaking, no part of their education. Far different, however, was the case with Rammohun. Though he had received his elementary education from a Gurumahashay, yet he not only attained, by dint of self-study, a knowledge of Bengali,—which, to say the least, was unrivalled by his contemporaries,—but afterwards brought the language itself to a high state of improvement."

While under the Gurumahashay Rammohun gave sufficient evidence of his intelligence and memory. He also picked up some Persian at home, but to acquire proficiency in Persian and Arabic he was sent to Patna at the age of nine. Patna was then a centre of Moslem culture. Learned Maulvies versed in Arabic and Persian were cosmopolitan in their outlook. It was here that Raja Shitab Roy, the famous Naib-Dewan, used to live. He was not only an upright and able administrator but was a man of broad sympathies. He did not make any distinction between a Hindu and a Muhammadan and was universally respected. Warren Hastings wrote of him: "He ever served the Company with a fidelity, integrity and ability which they can hardly expect to experience in any future officer of Government, whom they may choose from the same class of people." Raja Shitab Roy died in 1773, but it is presumed that

his influence worked for some time in Patna where he was in the position of Governor. Rammohun came to Patna in about 1780, and it is quite possible that he heard stories regarding the cosmopolitan views and sympathies of the last great Indian administrator of Patna. But the chief thing that influenced his thoughts was the study of Arabic. He read Euclid and Aristotle in this language, and his intellect was sharpened by the reasoning and method of treatment of these authors. Here he studied the Koran and also the writings of the Sufis. He began to question the age-old practices of the people and developed his Theistic tendencies. The study of Persian was at that time necessary for higher services and for admission into cultured society. But Rammohun commenced his search after truth when he came across the teachings of the great Prophet of Arabia who preached "God is but one." The simple logic of the worship of One True God went straight into his heart and he could not maintain his faith in the idolatrous practices. Fired with the enthusiasm of faith in the redeeming virtues of the One God, the Moslems spread their dominions widely over the world. This must have made a strong impression upon the imagination of young Rammohun. He was very fond of the Persian poets, Hafiz, Jelaluddin Rumi and others, and he used to recite passages from these poets with great earnestness in his later days.

Rammohun stayed about three years at Patna and according to the wishes of his mother he was sent to Benares for the study of Sanskrit. Benares holds a unique position in the cultural history of India. It is the most ancient seat of learning and even now it is at Benares that one can find the most eminent Sanskrit scholars. The indigenuous system of education has maintained its unbroken continuity in this eternal city where all the pious Hindus retire in their last days in search of peace and salvation. It is with the help of the scholars at Benares that a great deal of ancient lore has been recovered.

What Florence is to Italy, and Oxford to England, that is Benares to India. At Benares Rammohun formed acquaintance with the ancient Rishis of India. There he read the Vedas and the learned treatises in Sanskrit. In the rich treasures of the old writings he found the solution of some of the problems which were puzzling him. With the suggestions received at Patna he began to compare the old Hindu thoughts and realised that everywhere man was trying to attain the One. His comparative study of Arabic and Sanskrit led not only to the clarification of his ideas regarding truth but it ultimately produced that grand synthesis of different cultures. Thus started the Renaissance in Modern India.

Benares gave Rammohun a new illumination. The old Hindu scriptures provided him with materials for the reconstruction of his thoughts on national lines. He began to interpret the texts in the new light for which he found the ancient sages quite helpful. He could no longer reconcile himself to the idolatrous practices of his ancestors. When he returned from Benares he made it clear to his parents about the change in his views regarding religion. In his arguments with his father he would respectfully maintain his own standpoint. This irritated his father and the young man would sometimes think of leaving the world and, like a Sannyasi, of going into seclusion. But he was dissuaded from this course by the entreaties of his mother. About the relations between the father and the son Rammohun related his reminiscences to his friend William Adam, who gives a picture of it in his Memorandum published in 1879:—

“ It is not often that we get an insight in Hindu family life but his son gave me a slight glance at least in referring to the amicable differences that arose between himself and his father on this subject. I inferred from what R.R. said that he always left it to his father, as the head and most venerable member of

the family to open the question which he thought fit to moot, and when he has finished his immediate argument, he was generally willing to listen to his son with patience, which sometimes, however, forsook him. The son's response after the necessary preliminary admissions, usually began with the adversative article 'But' (*Kintu*). 'But notwithstanding all this, the orthodox conclusion you aim at does not follow.' The father complained of this, and, on one occasion at least, burst out in the tone of remonstrance, as of an injured party. 'Whatever argument I adduce you have always your *Kintu*, your counter-statement, your counter-argument, your counter-conclusion to oppose to me.' The son recounted this to me with half a smile on his lips and a touch of humour in his voice, but without any expression of disrespect to his father."

The courage to maintain his position against his father was rather extraordinary in a young Hindu who had been trained from childhood to submit to the authority of elders and of the ancient scriptures and traditions. In his quest of truth the boy of fourteen pursued his career undaunted. The frowns of parents or the danger of being thrown into the world helpless did not dissuade him from his course. He remained adamant and was prepared to face all misfortunes.

In the Autobiographical Sketch published by Sandford Arnot shortly after the Raja's death it is said that Ram-mohun wrote an essay calling in question the validity of the idolatrous practices of the Hindus. This and his views on that subject which were very well known to his kinsmen produced a coolness between himself and his people and then he resolved to proceed on travels to different countries within and beyond Hindustan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British power in India. But Dr. Lant Carpenter, who became very intimate with the Raja in England, says on

the authority of conversations with him in London and in Bristol that his travel had no connection whatsoever with the writing of the manuscript:—

“ Without disputing the authority of his father, he often sought from him information as to the reasons of his faith; he obtained no satisfaction; and he at last determined at the early age of 15, to leave the paternal home, and sojourn for a time in Tibet, that he might see another form of religious faith.”

The two statements do not seem to be contradictory. Possibly he had written an essay questioning the validity of the idolatrous practices. But this was not the only thing that brought a breach between himself and his parents. He felt that he should leave his home in order to seek peace of mind in seeing other lands. This was quite a natural feeling. There is no authentic account of his travels. It seems he followed the pilgrim-route to the Himalayas and crossed over to the other side where people used to go to Kailas and Manas Sarowar. Dr. Carpenter says he spent two or three years in Tibet and there he excited the anger of the worshippers of the Lama by his rejection of the doctrine that the Lama was the creator and preserver of the world. In this crisis he was saved by the kindness of some Tibetan women, and it was on account of the help he received from women that he always cherished deep respect for the fair sex. The spirit of revolt was strong in him; he not only revolted against his own people but was not afraid to protest against the practices of other peoples inconsistent with their ideals. The Lamaism that he witnessed was not in keeping with the tenets of Buddhism that they professed. Rammohun Roy protested against their practices and, consequently, was in danger of his life. In this foreign land he was impressed by the tenderness of the female heart and was full of gratitude for the sex. He then returned to India. His father had already sent

emissaries to call him back and at the age of about twenty he came home and was received with cordial welcome.

The young man came home with large experiences of the world. He had travelled in the different parts of Northern India and in Tibet and had learnt the provincial dialects and made himself familiar with the thoughts of poets like Nanak, Kavir, Dadu and other *Bhāktas* of the Baishnava school. He saw Buddhism in practice among the Tibetans and might have come across some Buddhist literature. The details of his travels are not available. But we have sufficient evidence of his adventure and his love of freedom at this time. He must have formed the ideals of his life at this time by his studies, observations and reflections. He could not remain long under the paternal roof in this state of mind. There were very few people to share his feelings. According to the practices of the Kulin Brahmans he had been married very early in life. We are told he had three marriages; his first wife died before he was nine and within a year of her death he was married to two girls. He could not have any idea of his responsibilities when he entered into the bonds of matrimony. On his return home from his travels he did not neglect his household duties. But we have not any definite information about this period of his life. It is evident that it was difficult for him to stay long at home. William Adam wrote in 1826, that he was obliged to reside for ten or twelve years at Benares. In a law suit brought by the Burdwan Raj Rammohun said in his evidence in 1823, that on account of his altered habits of life and change of opinion he was living apart from his father and he did not enjoy any share in the family property. For about ten years after the death of his father which took place in 1803, he had to manage for himself. Possibly he spent the greater portion of this time at Benares in his

studies in the old Sanksrit books. His first son, Radhaposad was born in 1800. The careful researches in State Records made by Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerji have brought out the information that Rammohun was looking after the Zamindary affairs of his father from 1796 to 1799. Mr. Banerji has also discovered a list of *Patni taluks* held by Rammohun in his own name, the total *jama* (revenue) of which ran up to several thousand rupees. It seems Rammohun used to visit Calcutta occasionally on business.

At the age of twenty-two he started reading English and did not acquire much proficiency in that language by 1801. But he applied himself to the study of the language with characteristic zeal and in time he obtained sufficient mastery in it and could express his ideas in elegant English. His writings were marked by a beauty of diction which any English writer could be proud of. A deep scholar in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit as he was he acquired a literary grace and dignity of expression. Later on while engaged in the study of Christian literature he picked up Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and we are told while he was in France he obtained a working knowledge in French. He was untiring in his pursuit of knowledge. He was not satisfied with translations and tried to read everything in the original. He had a master-passion to find out the truth. He felt that all prejudices should disappear when people would come in contact with the thoughts and ideals of the ancient seers. This desire to restore the ancient glories has produced a new life in India which may be compared to the Renaissance in Europe.

About his livelihood in this period of stay at Benares Miss Collet has suggested: "Probably, however, in such a seat of Hindu learning as Benares he might have obtained employment by copying manuscripts." This is not an improbable suggestion but to a young man of

his type there might have been many other ways of making money. But the researches of Mr. Banerji prove conclusively that he had his own source of income, and probably he stayed at Benares to avoid unnecessary friction with his father.

Rammohun came to see his father while the latter was lying in his death-bed. Although the son developed a method of thinking distinct from his father's he had nothing but respect for his piety and devotion. On the death of his father his mother took upon herself the management of the family property. Rammohun did not try to obtain possession of the property to which he had every claim. On the death of his elder brother, Jagamohun in 1811, Rammohun tried to take over the management of the property but his mother instituted a suit in the Supreme Court to disinherit him on the charge of heresy, but this suit failed. Rammohun maintained all along that opposition to idolatry did not constitute desertion of Hinduism. He wrote in his *Autobiographical Sketch*: "The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey." Even when he had established his claim to the property he did not exercise his right to avoid pain to his mother and other members of his family. His mother, in course of time, realised her mistake and handed over to Rammohun his rightful share before her departure for Puri. In the period when the property was in possession of his brother Jagamohun Rammohun had to depend on his own resources. The mother also would not give him any quarters. It was a trial for the young man but he was not terrified at the frowns of fortune. He entered the contest with characteristic courage.



## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE SERVICE OF THE COMPANY

#### **Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin.**

On the death of his father Rammohun took up his residence at Murshidabad, which was the capital of Bengal before Warren Hastings removed the headquarters to Calcutta. Murshidabad was still the centre of great attraction. Bengal had not yet departed from her old culture which was greatly influenced by Persian learning. Possibly Rammohun being a great scholar in Persian got some job there but the information available is so scanty that it is impossible to construct a connected account. It has been suggested by Mr. Brajendranath Banerji that he took service under Mr. Woodford, Registrar of the Murshidabad Court of Appeal and Circuit. His father and grandfather were in high positions at Murshidabad and he might have expected to get into some good post.

His residence at Murshidabad is remembered on account of his first literary venture. It was a treatise in Persian with a preface in Arabic, entitled *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* or A Gift to Monotheists, published in 1804. The treatise was not known to the public till it was translated by a learned Maulvi in 1884. In this treatise he made an attempt to prove the unity of all religions in the essentials and difference in non-essentials. He employed a large number of Arabic technical terms to prove his thesis.

"I travelled in the remotest parts of the world, in plains as well as in hilly lands, and found the inhabitants thereof agreeing generally in believing in the personality of One Being Who is the source of all that exists and its governor, and disagreeing in giving peculiar attributes to that Being and in holding different creeds consisting of the doctrines of religion and precepts of *haram* (forbidden) and *halal* (lawful). From this Induction it has been known to me that turning generally towards One Eternal Being, is like a natural tendency in human beings and is common to all individuals of mankind equally. And the inclination of each sect of mankind to a particular god or gods, holding certain especial attributes, and to some peculiar forms of worship or devotion, is an excrescent quality grown (in mankind) by habit and training."

The main argument of the treatise was that people attached greater importance to the particular forms of religion and considered that the sayings of the teachers in their religion alone were true. But they forgot that their own teachers were not free from the liability to commit mistakes or sins. He concluded that falsehood was common to all religions without distinction. But he was not a pessimist. He believed that when men would make impartial enquiry into the nature of the principles of different religions they would be able to distinguish between truth and untruth and would "turn to the One Being who is the fountain of the harmonious organisation of the universe" and would then pay attention to the good of society.

In spite of the fact that people gradually grow in knowledge by comparing the experiences of one another they persist in their old ways even when proved false. In reply to this Rammohun says: "The fact is that habit and training make the individuals blind and deaf notwithstanding their having eyes and ears." There are

men who are not sure of their position. They persist in the false step believing that there is no harm. Men are deluded by false teachers and with a view to escape from the punishment in the next world they submit to various hardships in this world. It is no doubt true that there are innumerable things in our life which we cannot explain, and we ascribe them to supernatural causes. Rammohun was a rationalist and he was then about twenty-two and scarcely came across the writings of the great Western philosophers when he wrote :

“ The secret lies in this, that in this world the existence of each rests on apparent causes and different conditions and modes of justice, so that if we take fully into consideration the near and remote causes for and against a thing, we may say that in the existence of that thing, the whole universe is concerned. But for want of experience and owing to narrowness (of views) the cause of a thing remains hidden to any one, another person having found it a good opportunity for achieving his objects ascribes it to his own supernatural power and thereby attracts people to himself. In the present age in India belief in supernatural and miraculous things has grown to such a degree that the people, when they find any wonderful things, the origin of which they can ascribe to their by-gone heroes or the present saints, immediately ascribe it to them, and although there be an obvious existence of its cause, they ignore it. But it is not hidden from those who have a sound mind and are friends of justice, that there are many things for instance, many wonderful inventions of the people of Europe and the dexterity of jugglers, the causes of which are not obviously known and seem to be beyond the comprehension of human power, but after a keen insight acquired by the instructions of others, these causes can be known satisfactorily.”

Knowledge is the only safeguard against deception and he wants people to appeal to reason in all diffi-

culties. As a rationalist he would approach all problems with a discerning mind. He has warned people against accepting contradictory statements.

His views regarding intermediaries in religious matters were developed very early and they may be clearly traced in the following passage:

“Some people argue in this way that the Almighty Creator has opened the way of guidance to mortal beings through the medium of prophets or leaders of religions. This is evidently futile, because the same people believe that all things in creation, whether good or bad, proceed from the Great Creator without any intermediate agency, and that the apparent causes are the means and conditions of that (*i.e.*, their coming into existence). Hence it is to be seen whether the sending of prophets and revelation to them from God, are immediately from God or through intermediate agency. In the first case, there is no necessity of an intermediate agency for guidance to salvation. And in the second case, there should be a series of intermediate agencies. Hence the advent of prophets and revelation like other external things have no reference to God, but depend upon the invention of an inventor. Prophets and others should not be particularly connected (or mixed up) with the teaching of a faith. Besides, what one nation calls a guide to a true faith, another calls a misleading to an erroneous way.”

As a bold seeker after truth he knew that his views might not be acceptable to many. It is no good to be on the side of the majority, if that majority do not live in truth. Every man can judge for himself and he should exercise his own intellectual power with the help of acquired knowledge to discern good from bad, so that this divine gift should not be left useless. To answer the arguments of those who believe in the doctrine of majority Rammohun says:

“ It is to be seen that the truth of a saying does not depend upon the multiplicity of the sayers and the non-reliability of a narration cannot arise simply out of the paucity of the number of the narrators. For it is admitted by the seekers of truth that truth is to be followed, although it is against the majority of the people.”

Rammohun classifies the people into four groups :

*Firstly*—A class of deceivers who in order to attract the people to themselves wilfully invent doctrines, creeds and faiths and put the people to troubles and cause disunion among them.

*Secondly*—A class of deceived people, who without enquiring into the fact, adhere to others.

*Thirdly*—A class of people who are deceivers and also deceived; they are those who having themselves faith in the sayings of another induce others to adhere to them.

*Fourthly*—Those who, by the help of Almighty God, are neither deceivers nor deceived.

This little book written in Persian gives us a glimpse into the working of the mind of Rammohun. A bold and clear thinker he calls a spade a spade. His attitude was not pleasing to many and consequently he had to deal with many adverse circumstances. Throughout his life he stood alone in the pursuit of truth and although at times he was happy to receive the co-operation of friends he had to fight almost singlehanded in defence of truth and righteousness. In this treatise he refers to another work of his entitled *Manazaratul Adyan* or Discussion of Various Religions. Unfortunately this valuable book has not been yet discovered, otherwise we would have been able to see how he made the comparative study at that age.

Rammohun was always very critical in his attitude towards prophets and religions. He was a firm believer in direct revelation. Any interference with the relations between man and his Maker by the interposition of a mediator was considered an infringement of this principle. His frank talks on these topics were not agreeable to the orthodox in any community. We are told that he also incurred the displeasure of Muhammadans on account of the criticism of their practices. Possibly this had something to do with his leaving Murshidabad which was a stronghold of the Muhammadans. His attitude towards Muhammad was always respectful and he was inspired considerably by the Islamic zeal to uphold so boldly the doctrine of monotheism. He was, however, not the man to accept anything blindly. He had his own process of spiritual growth, which included a vast amount of good-will towards all. His respect for Muhammad was so great that he was known in later life as a Zubberdust Maulvi. But this did not count with the orthodox.

### **Service under the Company.**

Recent researches of Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerji go to show that between 1800 and 1802 Rammohun was in some way connected with the Sadar Dewani Adalat and the College of Fort William. This seems to be possible from the letter of Mr. Digby to the Board of Revenue. He took service under Mr. Thomas Woodford, Acting Collector of Dacca Jelalpur (now Faridpur) on March 7, 1803, and on the latter going on leave on May 14, he resigned office and proceeded to Radhanagar where he saw his father lying in his deathbed.

Rammohun had formed the acquaintance of John Digby, an Officer of the East India Company, in about 1801. Mr. Digby formed a high estimate of his character and attainments. At the time that the two

met Rammohun had picked up some English and "could merely speak it well enough to be understood upon the most common topics of discourse, but could not write it with any degree of correctness." The information regarding the period in which Rammohun served under the Company is not sufficiently full. It seems Mr. Digby helped him in getting a job. But the first appointment was not good enough for a respectable Indian. Since the reforms introduced by Cornwallis all avenues to positions of responsibility were closed to the Indians. Rammohun's scholarship in the Oriental languages did not entitle him even to a decent post. From the recent discoveries in the Record Office at Rungpur we gather he was employed as a private Munshi of Mr. Digby when he was Collector at Jessore. But Mr. Digby does not refer to this in the Note which he wrote as a sort of Introduction to a publication in England containing Rammohun's translation of the *Kena Upanishad* and of the Abridgement of the Vedanta in 1817. In his evidence in connection with a suit instituted against him by the Burdwan Raj Rammohun himself stated that he resided at Ramgurh, Bhagalpur and Rungpur. Jessore is not mentioned there. A few letters have been discovered by Mr. Jyotirmoy Dasgupta in the records preserved at Rungpur, and in one of those letters addressed to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Mr. Digby wrote that Rammohun Roy acquired a knowledge of the regulations and of the general system to be adopted for the collection of the revenue while he worked under him in the "capacity of a private Munshi during the term of my acting as collector of the District of Jessore."

Mr. Digby was at Ramgurh from 1805 to 1808 and at Bhagalpur from 1808 to 1809. He worked as a Collector of Rungpur from October 20, 1809 to December 1814. Mr. Digby writes: "He was afterwards employed as Dewan, or principal native officer in the collection of

revenues, in the district of which I was for five years Collector, in the East India Company's Civil Service." The statement does not say that Rammohun Roy was Dewan for five years. But tradition associates his name with Rungpur before he came down to Calcutta. The records now discovered tell us that Rammohun Roy was not confirmed in the position of the Dewan by the Board of Revenue inspite of strong representation on his behalf by Mr. Digby. Rammohun held the position of *Sheristadar* in the Fouzdary Court for three months (August to October 1809) and the position of the Dewan falling vacant in December, 1809 he filled it temporarily. Mr. Digby wrote to the Board informing about the resignation of Gholam Shaw, the late Dewan, and in course of the letter he said, "I beg leave to acquaint you for the information of the Board that I have appointed Rammohun Roy in his room, a man of very respectable family and excellent education, fully competent to discharge the duties of such an office and from a long acquaintance with him I have reason to suppose that he will acquit himself in the capacity of Dewan with industry, integrity and ability."

In further elucidation of his recommendation and in reply to certain queries Mr. Digby wrote that Rammohun Roy was thoroughly acquainted with the regulations, accounts, etc., and that Mr. Digby had formed high opinion of his probity and general qualifications in a five years' acquaintance with him. He further mentioned that two zamindars, one Hindu and one Muhammadan, were prepared to stand security for him. But the Board of Revenue was not prepared to confirm the appointment as he did not possess long experience in transacting revenue details. Mr. Digby resented the attitude of the Board and in a strong note urged the Board to refer to the principal Officer of the Sadar Dewani and of the College of Fort William for the character and qualifications of the man he proposed. He was so



favourably disposed towards Rammohun that he incurred the displeasure of the Board in urging his case so vehemently. In the course of his letter he wrote:

“ Being thoroughly acquainted with the merits and abilities of Rammohun Roy, it would be very repugnant to my feelings to be compelled so far to disgrace him in the eyes of the natives as to remove him from his present employment, in which I have continued him as officiating in the hope that the character which will be giver of him by the natives to whom the Board are referred will induce them to confirm him in the appointment of Dewan of my office, for which, I am confident, he is perfectly well qualified.”

These arguments did not change the attitude of the Board and Mr. Digby was reprimanded for showing disrespect to the Board. The Collector expressed regret for offending the Board but he still insisted that Rammohun Roy should be given a fair trial and at least they should allow him to authorise Rammohun to officiate for a few months longer, by which means the Board would be enabled to judge of his real qualifications. He gave the Board to understand that on account of his disappointment he used strong language:

“ If under the strong conviction which I felt of the supreme talents, judgment and character of the person whom I recommended to the Board and if under the disappointment I experienced in the rejection by the Board of that person so eminently qualified by talent, knowledge and respectability of character to promote the public interests connected with my office, I have been betrayed into the warmth of expression which could bear the construction of disrespect, I sincerely regret the inadvertancy and beg you will assure the Board that, far from entertaining any deliberate intention of disrespect, I meant merely to express in a respectful manner my surprise at the rejection of so

intelligent a person and to remind the Board of the existence of precedents which would authorise the appointing of persons less entitled to it on the ground of disqualification adverted to by the Board than Rammohun Roy."

It is rarely that a superior officer fights so vehemently for an Indian as did Mr. Digby for Rammohun Roy. But the higher authorities remained adamant. Rammohun Roy continued to officiate upto the 28th March, 1811, when another man was recommended in his place, and this recommendation was accepted by the Board. Thus ends the official career of the greatest Indian of the time. His high qualifications were not found acceptable to the Board of Revenue. Mr. Digby's earnest pleading failed to convince the Board and Rammohun Roy retired into private life, which proved to be of immense good to his countrymen as well as to humanity. Relieved of the burden of office he could devote greater time to the vocation of his life. He gave ample proof of his knowledge of revenue and judicial matters in the Memoranda which he submitted to the Select Committee of the House of Commons later on. He was in office for about five years and in this short period he earned the reputation of an able officer. Such a man in other times would have risen to the highest office in the state and would have been able to promote the welfare of the people in a much more acceptable form. In fact in a play written when he was in England it was suggested that he should be made the Governor General, and it was strongly rumoured that he would be appointed a member of the Governor-General's Council. But the distrust which the rulers showed towards the natives had its effect to the middle of the century. The system of government had to be thoroughly overhauled. The Charter Act of 1833 contained a clause admitting the claims of the Indians to an equality with the Europeans. But the promise was not fully carried out. The highest

post even then held was that of a Deputy Collector. The anomaly was to some extent removed later on by open competitive system of examination for the Civil Service. But early in the nineteenth century long before English education was introduced nobody thought of the competitive system and the only thing which counted was the favour of the authorities. His talents and character could not secure him a good job, but he employed them in the service of the country in a much better way.

### **Rammohun Roy at Rungpur.**

We are told that Rammohun came to Calcutta in 1815 and that he came from Rungpur. He remained at Rungpur even when he left office. On retirement from the service of the Company Rammohun became the guardian of the minor proprietors of the estate of the late Rajkishore Chowdhury of Udashi Pargana, Rungpur. He held this post till 1815. With the income of his office and by able management of his resources he accumulated some money and purchased an estate yielding Rs. 10,000 a year. An evidence of his economic condition is found in a document discovered at Rungpur. Mr. Digby issued an order to the Sub-Treasurer, Fort William, on the 30th September, 1809, to pay to Rammohun Roy Rs. 3,000. Rammohun Roy was then a Sheristadar and as Dewan his income was better. He did not cut off his connection with his native village entirely. We have seen that he had purchased some properties there. But he did not feel quite at home in the village on account of constant friction with his mother.

His elder brother died in 1811, and his wife became a *Sati*, i.e., burned herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. This created a painful impression upon his mind. He carried on the agitation against the practice of *Sati* when he settled in Calcutta, with a

personal sentiment mixed up with it. On the death of Jagamohun his son, Govinda Prosad Roy succeeded to the family property. But he could not manage it efficiently, and it is believed, on his failure to pay the revenue Rammohun purchased it and thus came into possession of the family estate. His mother tried to disinherit him but did not succeed. Even when Rammohun established his full claim to the property he did not interfere with the management by his mother.

Rammohun was reluctant to cut off his connection with his native village. But the people made it too hot for him there. When he wanted to marry his son, Rādhaprosad they put various obstacles in his way. He was stigmatised as a non-Hindu and they did not like to form any matrimonial relations with him. But even in those days there were enlightened Hindus, and one of them came forward to offer a daughter to Rādhaprosad.

There are various stories of the persecutions to which he was subjected. An influential man named Ramjoy Batabyal of the village of Ramnagar used to come with about 5,000 men and all of them shouted in imitation of cocks early in the morning, and in the evening they would throw bones of cows and other animals inside his house. These persecutions were extremely trying for the members of his family. Rammohun, however, maintained his patience in the midst of these unseemly conduct of his neighbours. Ultimately his patience triumphed and the persecutions were gradually stopped.

Although the neighbours became quieter Rammohun's mother was not reconciled to his views. She was not prepared to allow his wives and daughter-in-law to remain in the family dwelling-house. Rammohun wanted to build another house in the same village. But this was not possible on account of the influence of his

mother throughout the countryside of Krishnanagar. Rammohun then selected a site on a cremation ground in the village of Raghunathpur. He built the house in such a way that it might help him in his spiritual exercises. In front of the house he built a spacious platform where he used to sit for prayers. On each side of the raised platform the Vedic passages, *Om*, *Tat Sat*, and *Eṁamevadwitiyam* were inscribed. Each brick with which the platform was constructed bore the imprint *Om*. There he used to sit thrice daily and worshipped the One True God in silent meditation away from the turmoils of the world. He maintained his connection with the village even when he settled in Calcutta. Whenever he would go out of the village he would walk round this sacred place and on his return to the village again he would visit the place first.

It is quite clear that although Rammohun kept up his connection with the village he did not find congenial company there. On retirement from service he remained at Rungpur for a few years more. The presence of Mr. Digby was a great attraction for him. Mr. Jyotirmoy Dasgupta writes in the *Modern Review* for September, 1928, that he built a house near Mahiganj at Tamphat about four miles from the Court. But this house cannot be traced now. There is also a tradition that he dug a big tank near the Court at his own expense. At Rungpur Rammohun formed a circle of his own. A number of friends used to meet in his house to discuss religious topics. They were in sympathy with Rammohun's views, and held that the practice of worshipping idols was not beneficial to spiritual growth. They used to discuss the sublime method of the contemplation of the Infinite according to the Vedic Rishis. These evening talks were very comprehensive and we may trace the development of his mission from this place. There used to live a large number of Marwaries at Rungpur professing Jainism. In order to discuss with

them the problems of religion he read their sacred book the *Kalpa Sutra*. He never talked on things without full knowledge. The literature of other religions were not familiar to the Marwaries; naturally therefore they could not have formed an estimate of the ideas of Rammohun unless the topics were presented from their standpoint.

It was at Rungpur that Rammohun met a Sannyasi named Hariharananda Tirthaswami. He was a Tantric but vastly learned in the Hindu philosophical literature. His original name was Nanda Kumar Vidyalkankar, and he was a teacher at Palpara, near Sukhsagar. He was noted for his scholarship and eloquence, and had renounced the world at an early age. Rammohun was impressed by his devotion and scholarship. He persuaded him to stay with him and they used to read together the Hindu scriptures. The friendship between the two grew deep and we are told when Rammohun came down to Calcutta he brought with him the Tirthaswami. The influence of this *Abadhut* may be traced in his hymns and prayers. Hariharananda introduced to Rammohun his brother Ramchandra Vidyabagish who looked after the Brahma Samaj when Rammohun left for England. He resided mostly at Benares where he died at the age of seventy in January, 1832.

Rammohun's work was not confined to mere discussion. He is said to have composed several treatises in Persian at this time and won the love and respect of a large number of people. The sympathies of Mr. Digby were an asset of great value. Not only he had a high regard for his character and scholarship he helped him considerably in the study of European thoughts. Rammohun used to get from him the journals and magazines from abroad and studied from there all the current problems of the day. Mr. Digby wrote about the period of their contact thus:

“ By perusing all my English correspondence with diligence and attention, as well as by corresponding and conversing with European gentlemen, he acquired so correct a knowledge of the English language as to be enabled to write and speak it with considerable accuracy. He was also in the constant habit of reading the English newspapers, of which the continental politics chiefly interested him and from thence he formed a high admiration of the talents and prowess of the late ruler of France, and was so dazzled with the splendour of his achievements as to become sceptical as to the commission, if not blind to the atrocities of his crimes, and could not help deeply lamenting his downfall, notwithstanding the profound respect he ever professed for the English nation; but when the transports of his sorrow had subsided, he considered that part of his political conduct which led to his abdication to have been so weak, and so mildly ambitious, that he declared his future detestation of Buonaparte would be proportionate to his former admiration.”

His stay at Rungpur may therefore be considered as a preparation for his main work in life. Here he worked in co-operation with Hindus, Muhammadans, Jains and Christians. An *Abadhut* of the Tantric school could also claim his friendship. An Englishman who was his superior in office and was his patron became one of his warm admirers. He held discussions, wrote books and pamphlets and might have carried on some other activities of which no records were kept. In connection with his service under Mr. Digby there is a story that when Rammohun agreed to work under him he obtained a written agreement to the effect that Rammohun would never be kept standing before his superior officer and that no order should be issued to him as a mere Hindu functionary. The story has no foundation except in a letter signed by Montgomery Martin, which appeared in the *Court Journal* of October 5, 1833, i.e., shortly after

his death. The Indians were not treated well by the British officers in those days. As a self-respecting man Rammohun might have asked from Mr. Digby an understanding that he should not be humiliated in the presence of the Collector like the other Indians. Mr. Digby had very great regard for him, and it was not quite improbable that Mr. Digby should have assured him of respectful treatment.

Rammohun's cosmopolitan views and his attempt to reconstruct the religious life of the people according to the best tenets of the saints of all countries did not find acceptance among the orthodox. At Rungpur he had a rival in the Dewan of the Judge's Court. This man named Gourikanta Bhattacharya was also proficient in Persian and Sanskrit. He tried to controvert the views of Rammohun in a Bengali tract entitled "Jnananjan." This pamphlet was later on published in a revised form in 1838. References are found in this tract of Rammohun's writings in Persian and Sanskrit. He started translating the Vedanta about this time. Gourikanta gathered round him a large following with a view to challenge the new doctrines and to hound Rammohun out of Rungpur. In this they were successful but time has proved that Rammohun Roy was right and that the opposition was inspired by a spirit to discredit him.

On the departure of Mr. Digby Rammohun's position became insecure and the opposition gained sufficient strength. It was possibly on account of the attitude of the people that Rammohun decided to leave the place and to come down to Calcutta. He started a new chapter in the history of the country by his activities in the capital of the British.



## CHAPTER III

### DEFENCE OF HINDU THEISM

#### Rammohun at Calcutta.

With the establishment of the British rule in Bengal Calcutta, the headquarters of the new Government, became the social as well as the intellectual centre of the province. Since the time that Job Charnock laid the foundation of the city by the end of the seventeenth century it gradually rose as the most important commercial city in the East. Assumption of ruling power by the East India Company increased its importance and all forces for the good of the community radiated from it, and the people in the country-side began to imitate the citizens of Calcutta. It was in the capital that the life of the province was moulded. Rammohun felt that he would be able to render greater good to the country by coming down to Calcutta.

On the departure of Mr. Digby for England he found no interest in the provincial town of Rungpur. His step-brother Ramlochan Roy had built for him a house at Maniktala. The house now stands on the Upper Circular Road. It was situated in the midst of an extensive garden. We are told that the garden spread over a wide area of fifteen bighas. Subsequently he built another house which is still in the possession of his family. It was his ambition that after retiring from the world he would lead a quiet life and devote himself to the study of the

Vedant and Mesnavi. "To retire from the hurry and bustle of the world—to revel in the luxuries of lettered leisure—to cultivate philosophy and religion amidst the solitudes of jungles—to consecrate his energies to the furtherance of the great work of his country's regeneration,"—writes Kissory Chand Mitra, "this was the *beau ideal* of his happiness. Business which is the 'be-all and the end-all' of the existence of the great majority of mankind, whether located in civilized, demi-civilized, or uncivilized, countries, was considered by Rammohun Roy as something too low to engross a whole life. He not only knew but felt the great truth that man is created for higher ends than the acquisition of rupees that being gifted with moral, and intellectual powers, nothing short of the cultivation of all these powers can promote his happiness—that there is that in man which the things of this world cannot altogether satisfy, which longs after eternity, and after Him of whom it hath been sublimely said that he 'inhabiteth eternity.' "

When Rammohun came to Calcutta he had reached the age of forty-two. He had all the qualities of a leader. He was six feet in height and had a majestic appearance. People were impressed by his dignity of bearing and his charming manners. His eyes were beaming with intelligence and they had the expression of good-will towards all. He was handsome and had about him a sweetness of character. Within a short time he became a prominent figure in Calcutta and formed a circle around him. Society in those days in Calcutta was in a deplorable condition. A follower of Rammohun describing the condition of the Hindus said: "At the time when Rammohun arrived at Calcutta the whole of Bengal was steeped in ignorance; the country was overflowed with the rituals of idolatry. People here did not appreciate either the duties inculcated in the Vedas (Karmakanda) or the higher philosophy (Brahmajnan) of the Upanishads; but the festivities

in which they used to find pleasure were the sacrifice of animals on the occasion of the worship of Durga, the pastoral songs connected with the Nandotsav (mainly dealing with the birth of Krishna), the sprinkling of colour at the time of the *Holi*, the crowds at the pulling of carts in the Rathjatra, and similar things. People strongly believed that they could escape from the punishment of sin, purify themselves and earn religious merit by bathing in the Ganges, offering money to the Brahmans and Baishnavas, going on pilgrimage to the sacred places and by keeping fast. Their religious scruples were mainly confined to the rigid rules in the matter of food; the purity of heart depended upon the nature of the food. The most effective thing in the process of purification was to take food only once a day and that cooked by himself. The Brahmans who accepted service under the English used to make particular efforts to maintain their superiority and caste privileges. After finishing their business in the office when they went home in the evening they would first bathe with a view to be cleansed of the impurities by coming in contact with the Mlechhas, offer their regular daily Sandhya mantras and then take their food in the eighth part of the day. This practice would ensure their position in the community and the Brahmans would talk highly of them. Those who could not take so much pain would finish their Sandhya and other formalities before they went to the office; all the sins they committed by coming in contact with the Mlechhas were excused on their paying money to the Brahmans. The Brahmans, in those days, were the newspapers; after bathing in the Ganges early in the morning they would go from door to door with their *kosa-kusi* (long copper spoons) in their hands and would spread all sorts of news. They would specially mention the quantity of gifts offered by the different donors, and the respective merit they had earned at the *Shraddha* or the *Durgotsav*. People used to distribute

their gifts sometimes to escape from bad name, and sometimes to get renown, although they knew that the Brahmans receiving gifts were in most cases ignorant of the Sastras. The influence of the Brahmans over the rich Sudras was immense. They used to earn a lot of money by some times blessing the Sudras with consecrated water touched by their feet, or the dust of their feet. This kind of things may be still seen in villages and towns. The learned Brahmans in those days paid more attention to the study of Nyaya and Smritis, and their position depended upon their knowledge in those subjects. But they were so ignorant of their original authority, the Vedas, that most of them did not know the meaning of the Mantras they repeated thrice a day. The rich had nothing to do with learning, most of them could not spell the words, not to say of using them correctly. They thought it was sufficient if they could write letters and keep the accounts for their worldly purpose. If anyone of them could write the English alphabets it was considered the height of his glory. There were some books in poetry such as *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, *Chandi* of Kavikankān, *Annadamangal* and *Vidyasundar* of Bharat Chandra, but the books in prose were very few. Of the chief amusements of the youth of Calcutta were the fights of Bulbuls and Kites, the Krishna-yatra (theatrical performance of scenes connected with the life of Krishna), musical competition of the Kavis who used to indulge in all kinds of filthy attacks, and playing upon *Bins*, *Sitars* and *Tablas*. On the occasion of *Holi* they used to walk about in the streets with yellow water mixed with turmeric paste. But they were happily free from the drink evil; they were not yet contaminated by the evils of the European civilization. On the occasion of the *Puja* the rich used to invite to dinner the English men and women but did not dine with them. They were not willing to give up idolatry but were obliged to introduce some changes

in their manners and customs." (Adapted from an article in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* of 1865).

Education was in its lowest ebb, religion was of a dull routine type, people blindly followed their old usages without caring to enquire into their meaning. Their enjoyments were of the crude sort and there was very little vitality in the social life. Kissorychand Mitra writing in the *Calcutta Review* of 1845 says:

"So effectually has the cruel and demoralising superstition of Hindus extinguished the religious feelings of their nature, and perverted their ideas of the very fundamentals of divine worship, that they never think of worshipping their God except by means of unintelligible and unmeaning *montras*. These *montras*, which they have been taught to articulate without comprehending their import, are considered to be a passport to heaven. Such lip-deep and mechanical devotion is a mockery of worship, and a downright insult to Him who is *to be loved with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength.*"

Rammohun was keenly conscious of the degraded condition of society. He felt that people suffered mainly on account of the ignorance of the Sastras. His spirit rebelled against the iniquitous practices. He became anxious to release the minds of his countrymen from their old superstitions by reviving interest in the ancient lore. He began the work that Erasmus did for Europe. He adopted several methods in carrying on his work of illumination; his first method was to hold friendly discussions, secondly, he started schools for spreading knowledge; his third method was to circulate literature by publishing tracts and books and lastly, by organising societies for systematic work. He devoted his talents, his time and his fortune to the promotion of the welfare of his countrymen

### The Atmiya Sabha.

The fame of Rammohun preceded him. The educated Bengalis in those days had heard of his views and they were amazed at his boldness in going against the orthodox practices. There were kindred souls in the city of Calcutta who very soon formed acquaintance with him. They were attracted by his personality and suavity of manners. Most of them held respectable position in Calcutta society. Men like Gopimohun Tagore, Baidyanath Mukherjee, Jaykrishna Sinha, Kashinath Mullik, Brindaban Mitra, Gopinath Munsî, Raja Badan Chandra Roy, Raghuram Siromani, Haranath Tarakabhushan, Dwarkanath Munsî were big Zamindars. They were connected with various Hindu institutions. Gopimohun Tagore was the head of the Tagore family. His son Prasannakumar Tagore attained his eminence as a great lawyer. Baidyanath Mukherjee was one of the founders and the first Secretary of the Hindu College. His son Anukulchandra became a judge of the Calcutta High Court. Joykrishna Sinha was the owner of the extensive gardens known as the Raja's Bagan in Calcutta. Kashinath Mullik belonged to the famous Mullik family of Andul on the other side of the Ganges. Brindaban Mitra was the son of Raja Pitambar Mitra and his grandson Rajendralal Mitra became famous as an eminent Orientalist.

Besides these men of the aristocratic society there were others coming from the cultured middle class. Chandrasekhar Dev was in the service of the Burdwan Raj and became an ardent disciple of Rammohun. Tarachand Chakravarti was also a member of the Burdwan Administration Council. Ramgopal Ghose was a rich man of Calcutta and he was noted as a great orator. These men formed a group to discuss political questions and were known as the Chakravarti faction on

account of the fact that Tarachand Chakravarti was their prominent member. Others used to come to Rammohun's place frequently. Among them were Nandakishore Bose, father of Rajnarayan Bose, one of the most esteemed associates of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore; Bhairabchandra Dutt who was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Bethune School; Brajamohan Mazumdar, the well-known author of *Pauttalik-Prabodh*, a treatise against idolatry; Annadaprosad Banerjea, the Zaminadar of Telinipara, and Kalinath Roy of Taki. Nilratan Haldar, the compiler of a book called the *Jnanratnakar*, Raja Kalisankar Ghoshal of Bhukailas Raj family, Dwarkanath Tagore and Prasannakumar Tagore were very intimately associated with him. Hariharananda Tirthaswami came along with Rammohun from Rungpur. A Hindusthani Brahman named Sivaprosad Misra, a man versed in the Upanishads used to live with him and helped him in his studies of those philosophical books.

The circle that Rammohun Roy formed about himself was a cosmopolitan group. These men had their different interests. But all of them came to him for advice, for friendly exchange of ideas on various topics. Rammohun formed an inner circle called the Atmiya Sabha in 1815. The main object of this friendly society was to discuss matters spiritual. The society used to meet every week in the Maniktala house of Rammohun, and after two years in his Simla house now situated on the Amherst Street. Subsequently meetings were held in other places. In those meetings passages from Hindu texts were recited and hymns composed by Rammohun and his friends were sung. Sivaprosad Misra was the first reciter and Govinda Mala was the first singer. The meetings were not quite public but people from outside had access to those meetings. In this way started the movement for the revival of the worship of One True God, as practised by the ancient sages. Although these were informal meetings they shaped the character of

*WHERE RAMMOHUN LIVED IN CALCUTTA*



MANIKTALA HOUSE  
113, Upper Circular Road.



SIMLA HOUSE





many members of the congregation. From this small beginning Rammohun developed his Theistic Movement which created a sensation in the orthodox community. At times interesting discussions were arranged by the Sabha. In one such meeting held in the house of Behari Lal Chaubey of Barabazar Subrahmanya Sastri, a learned Brahman from Madras, challenged Rammohun to a public discussion in the presence of a big audience including Radhakanta Deb, the leader of the Hindu community. The meeting took place in Decemebr, 1819 (17th of Paus). The Sastri stated that the Brahmans who did not study the Vedas were Bratyas, i.e., they could hardly claim the title of Brahmans. The study of the Vedas alone could entitle a man to attain the knowledge of Brahman, and as a preparation he had to perform the works enjoined by the Vedas and the Smritis. He therefore asserted that the performance of duties connected with the Varnasram Dharma was absolutely necessary for acquisition of the Brahmajnan. In reply Rammohun said that the performance of duties of the Varnasram Dharma might help in giving expression to the knowledge of Brahma, but it did not prove that without the performance of these duties it was impossible to attain the knowledge of God. The Rishi Vedavyas has said in two passages that men without performing the duties of Varnasram are also capable of acquiring the knowledge of God. There were several men mentioned in the Vedas, who without performing the duties of Varnasram attained the knowledge. Women like Maitrayee and others also attained the supreme knowledge. Bidur was the son of a Sudra mother, and he did not study the Vedas. And we are told that he was endowed with true knowledge. Besides that the Smritis do not refuse the right of the four Varnas to the study of *Itihasa*, *Puranas* and *Agamas*, and the study of these subjects too may help in acquiring true knowledge. The cogency of argument of Rammohun brought about the discomfi-

ture of the learned Sastri. The arguments printed in Sanskrit, Bengali and Hindustani were broadcast.

He met his opponent on his own field and showed by reference to the passages in the Sastras that the attainment of perfect knowledge was not denied to anybody, in whatever Varna he might be born. The basis of religious life depended not on the external qualities but upon moral and intellectual attainments. The knowledge of God was not confined to the Vedas; the study of the Gita or the Puranas and Agamas and other devotional books might help in showing the right way. The attainment of self-knowledge is possible by means of study, contemplation and self-examination. The exclusive claim of any particular scripture cannot be maintained. The results of the conference created a stir in Calcutta; the profound learning of Rammohun impressed the audience and his work of reformation was made widely known. Martin Luther attained his celebrity by nailing his famous theses at the gate of the Church at Wittenberg. Rammohun faced the school of orthodox thinkers and in an open challenge undermined the very basis of the Varnasrama system and the exclusive position of the Vedas. Fortunately for him there was neither the Pope nor the Emperor to coerce him. He carried on his work of illumination undaunted.

The labours of Rammohun bore fruit in various ways. The symbols of orthodoxy gradually lost their charm. An interesting event took place in a court of law in 1820. A witness refused to take oath by touching the water of the Ganges, which was held sacred by the Hindus. He said that he was a follower of Rammohun Roy and did not believe in the sanctity of a river. Taking oath continued to be a practice in European countries till the rise of the Quakers but the love of truth was an important feature of Rammohun's movement and from the very beginning the seekers of truth revolted against all shams.

### Publication of the Vedanta and Upanishads.

"The extermination of Hindu idolatry and the dissemination of sound and enlightened views of the Supreme Being—of the unseen and future world—of truth—of happiness—of final beatitude;—this was the great object of his being." says Kishorychand Mitra, "And to the furtherance of this object, he unhesitatingly devoted his talents, his time and his fortune. Endowed with an energy of character and strength of intellect of which his age furnished no model, he braved the most formidable obstacles which opposed themselves to the progress of the good cause he had espoused; and the pecuniary sacrifices he made to promote that cause were indeed noble. Though his fortune was anything but princely, yet he gladly consecrated a large portion of it to its advancement. Never did a reformer labour more zealously, more sincerely, more indefatigably. Never did a reformer unite in himself more happily the urbanity of the gentleman, and the shrewdness of the man of the world, with the profundity of the philosopher, and the enthusiasm of the theologian." "It is impossible for us to estimate adequately the exertions he made to liberate the Hindu mind" goes on the writer, "from spiritual bondage, and to indoctrinate it with the pure, elevated and living principles of veneration, justice and benevolence. One of the means he adopted for the realization of this important end, was the publication and distribution of tracts, on moral and religious subjects. He published them all at his own expense, and distributed them gratuitously among his countrymen."

The renaissance in India started with the closer acquaintance of the people with the profound truths realised by their forefathers; they began to feel that in the realm of spiritual experience the ancient Indians reached a very elevated plane and they inherited the rich treasures of their own countrymen. A new ideal

worked in the minds of the people when they were looked down upon by the votaries of other creeds. Rammohun had read widely and deeply and with a view to draw the attention of his countrymen to the beauty and sublimity of Indian thoughts in the past translated the Vedanta and the Upanishads. The first book he published was the translation of the Vedanta Sutra in Bengali in 1815. It contained an introduction explaining the object of the publication. The current fallacies regarding the worship of the One True God who is eternal, invisible and omnipotent were refuted with a clarity. This was the first important attempt to write on abstruse subjects in Bengali prose. Rammohun had to explain the way in which the book was to be read.

The purport of the introduction was that One God was the theme of the Vedas, and the Vedanta also proves the existence of One God. No other god or no man can be the object of worship. The Vedanta Sutra, in not a single of the five hundred and fifty sutras, has referred to any such god or man. In the Vedas there are no doubt references to some gods and beings endowed with supreme power, but that does not prove that these deities or beings were God. It simply means that God is omnipresent and some times supreme power is manifest in some persons. The system of the worship of the sentient objects and of stocks and stones is not very old in India. On account of the fact that many people are not familiar with the Vedanta they have been deceived by interested Brahmans. With a view to dispel this ignorance that the Vedanta Sutra was published in the original Sanskrit with a translation in Bengali.

He explains the feasibility of the worship of One God in spirit. First there are some who say that God the Lord of the universe is incomprehensible and cannot be expressed in words or conceived by the mind. It is therefore impossible to approach such an entity. A deity

endowed with form and quality is therefore a necessity. Rammohun replies to such objection by an analogy. A child was carried away by the enemy to some strange land. He therefore did not know his father. When he grew up to be a young man he could not accept whoever would appear before him as his father. He would rather address his invocations or pray for the welfare of the father who was his progenitor. Similarly it is true that the reality of God is not comprehensible but he cannot be conceived of through any destructible object. We see the sun, moon and other objects but our knowledge about these things are not full. God is in the same way known although we cannot claim full knowledge about Him. Through creation we know of the Creator. The part cannot stand for the whole. No created thing can stand for the Creator. In India and elsewhere there are many persons who worship the Invisible God and how can we therefore say that His worship is not possible.

The second argument that Rammohun tried to rebut was that it was not proper to depart from the views held by our ancestors. People, no doubt, have great regards for their ancestors and kinsfolk; but for this reason it is not necessary that a man should accept blindly what his own people have done. It is only the unthinking brutes that follow the example of their kindreds, but how can a man endowed with reasoning faculties to distinguish between right and wrong direct his life or determine his spiritual exercise from the practices of the kinsmen without examining for himself what is good and what is bad. If this had been adopted everywhere and at all times then there would not have been different views and different creeds. There are men holding different faiths in the same family, and our practices are undergoing constant modification. In view of these facts we cannot maintain the theory that there should be no departure from the

practices of our own people, specially when it becomes necessary in the interests of our spiritual wellbeing.

Thirdly, they say that the worship of Brahma, the Infinite God makes people forget all sense of distinction between proper and improper, between bad smell and sweet smell and between fire and water. The reply of Rammohun to this kind of argument was characteristic. He questions the bonafide of the objector and says he does not know what is the basis of this sort of faith. Because people say that men like Narada, Janak and Sanatkumar, Suka, Vasishta, Vyas, Kapila and others were Brahmanees (had attained the true knowledge of God); and they did not lose distinction between water and fire, and they used to attend to state and household duties and to give proper lessons to their disciples. It is therefore absurd to say that people lose all sense of distinction by worshipping Brahma. It is rather strange that there should be men to believe that by worshipping different gods men retain their proper sense and by worshipping Brahma they would lose all sense of proportion and behave like madmen. If you ask why there should be any sense of distinction when you realise the sense of unity through the attainment of the knowledge of One God it may be said in reply that the senses perform their different functions, the ear the function of hearing, the eye that of seeing, and so forth, the father has his duties for his children as distinct from the duties of the children towards the father according to divine laws.

The fourth and the last point that Rammohun took up to argue was the common view that in the Puranas and Tantras there is provision for the worship of the objective gods. Although there is provision for the worship of objective gods at the same time in those very books in the philosophic parts it is written that these objective gods are but the symbolic representation of Brahma, the One True God. Had it not been so the imaginary object

created by the mind for the purpose of worship would have disappeared as soon as the mind was directed to some other thing. The things made by hand are destroyed in course of time. All objects with name and forms are liable to destruction but God alone is to be known and to be worshipped. It is therefore true to say that the description of the objects of worship as having forms is merely for the edification of the dull-witted. Things which are beyond the ken of knowledge cannot be brought within the scope of reasoning of intelligent persons by means of self-contradictory arguments. But in the Puranas the problems discussed in one part are solved in the subsequent parts. Those who do not worship the Supreme God as proved by the Vedanta but worship gods created by their imagination may be asked whether they call those objects as God or they worship those objects as symbols only and consider somebody else as God. They cannot say that these objects are the True God because these things are destructible, are things made by their own hands and they are under their control. How can you call that which is destructible and artificial as God, and in the circumstances they will be also reluctant to call these things as representation of God even because God who is infinite and incomprehensible cannot be represented by limited things which are controlled by the senses. The representation should be according to the original but here it is the reverse; man is but the worshipper, and his objects of worship are under his control. It may be further said that God is omnipresent, and by worshipping those objects we are worshipping God and therefore those objects are being worshipped. If you had really known that God is present everywhere then you would not have had recourse to the different forms. In reply to the argument that in some forms the manifestation of God may be found in a large measure and we may worship such forms it may be said that



what is measured and has its growth and reduction cannot lay claim to the title of God. It cannot be conceived that the presence of God is abundant in some places and rare in other places. We do not see any extraordinary manifestation of God either in these forms. If you say that in these forms we witness the splendour of God in a large measure you commit a number of blunders. The ordinary things of the world may have their splendour in greater or smaller measure but that cannot be said with reference to the Divine. It is an old custom for the people to place some visible artificial object before them for worship and to present offerings in various forms before them. These measures they adopt for the edification of their minds.

But there are men sufficiently intelligent who can withdraw their minds from these imaginary things and pay their attention to the contemplation of the Omniscient True God and thereby attain true happiness. It is for them that Rammohun was working. It was for such thinking people that he translated the Vedanta into vernacular. He then explains how it is to be read. There was no good book in Bengali prose and his was the endeavour to write serious things in the spoken language of Bengal. He refutes the argument that the Vedas should not be read by the common people.

The Vedanta was written by Vedavyas about two thousand years before the birth of Christ and it contains the substance of the Vedic teachings. Some times the Sutras are not interpreted in the proper spirit. Rammohun followed the commentaries of Sankaracharya and gave a version of the Vedanta which would prove useful to all seekers of spiritual life. His interpretation was not always in accordance with the views of the orthodox people but he tried to represent the things in the light he had received. The Vedanta was a big book and many people would not take pains to study it. So he prepared

another book called the *Vedanta-Sara* which was also translated into English under the title of "An Abridgement of the Vedanta or the Resolution of all the Veds." In the sub-title he describes the nature of the book. He calls it the most celebrated and revered work of Brahmanical Theology; establishing the Unity of the Supreme Being; and that He alone is the object of propitiation and worship. The Introduction of this book is a valuable document indicating the mind of the author and it may be quoted here in full:

"The greater part of Brahmans, as well as other sects of Hindoos, are quite incapable of justifying that idolatry which they continue to practise. When questioned on the subject, in place of adducing reasonable arguments in support of their conduct, they conceive it fully sufficient to quote their ancestors as positive authorities. And some of them are become very ill-disposed towards me, because I have forsaken idolatry for the worship of the true and eternal God! In order, therefore, to vindicate my own faith and that of our early forefathers, I have been endeavouring, for some time past, to convince my countrymen of the true meaning of our sacred books; and to prove, that my aberration deserves not the opprobrium which some unreflecting persons have been so ready to throw upon me.

"The whole body of the Hindoo Theology, Law, and Literature, is contained in the Vedas, which are affirmed to be coeval with the creation. These works are extremely voluminous, and being written in the most elevated and metaphorical style, are, as may be well supposed, in many passages seemingly confused and contradictory. Upwards of two thousand years ago, the great Vyasa, reflecting on the perpetual difficulty arising from these sources, composed with great discrimination a complete and compendious abstract of the whole, and

also reconciled those texts which appeared to stand at variance. This work he termed *The Vedanta*, which compounded of two Sanskrit words, signifies the *Resolution of all the Vedas*. It has continued to be most highly revered by all Hindoos, and in place of the more diffused arguments of the Vedas is always referred to as equal authority. But from its being concealed within the dark curtain of the Sanskrit language, and the Brahmans permitting themselves alone to interpret, or even to touch any book of the kind, the Vedanta, although perpetually quoted, is little known to the public; and the practice of few Hindoos indeed bears the least accordance with its precepts !

“In pursuance of my vindication, I have to the best of my abilities translated this hitherto unknown work, as well as an abridgement thereof, into the Hindustanee and Bengalee languages, and distributed them, free of cost, among my own countrymen, as widely as circumstances have possibly allowed. The present is an endeavour to render an abridgement of the same into English, by which I expect to prove to my European friends, that the superstitious practices which deform the Hindoo religion have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its dictates !

“I have observed, that both in their writings and conversation, many Europeans feel a wish to palliate and soften the features of Hindoo idolatry; and are inclined to inculcate, that all objects of worship are considered by their votaries as emblematical representation of the Supreme Divinity ! If this were indeed the case, I might perhaps be led into some examination of the subject; but the truth is, the Hindoos of the present day have no such views of the subject, but firmly believe in the real existence of innumerable gods and goddesses, who possess, in their own departments, full and independent power; and to propitiate them, and not the true God,

are temples erected and ceremonies performed. There can be no doubt, however, and it is my whole design to prove, that every rite has its derivation from the allegorical adoration of the true Deity; but at the present day all this is forgotten, and among many it is even heresy to mention it!

I hope it will not be presumed that I intend to establish the preference of my faith over that of other men. The result of controversy on such a subject, however multiplied, must be ever unsatisfactory; for the reasoning faculty, which leads men to certainty in things within its reach, produces no effect on questions beyond its comprehension. I do no more than assert, that if correct reasoning and the dictates of common sense induce the belief of a wise, uncreated Being, who is the supporter and Ruler of the boundless universe, we should also consider him the most powerful and supreme Existence,—far surpassing our powers of comprehension or description. And, although men of *uncultivated* minds, and even some *learned* individuals, (but in this one point blinded by *prejudice*), readily choose, as the object of their adoration, anything which they can always see, and which they pretend to feel; the absurdity of such conduct is not thereby in the least degree diminished.

“My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry which, more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society, together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error: and by making them acquainted with their scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature’s God.

“By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahman, have exposed myself to the

complaining and reproaches even of some of my relations, whose prejudices are strong, and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice—perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation; my motives are acceptable to that Being who beholds in secret and compensates openly !”

The Vedanta was a book of undisputed authority with the Hindus. Rammohun tried by publishing this book to prove that the Hindus held the worship of One God as the only means of salvation. In further support of his views he brought to the notice of the public the Upanishads which are considered to be parts of the Vedas. In 1816 he published the Talabkar or Kena Upanishad connected with the Sama Veda, and the Isopanishad connected with the Yayur Veda. Next year appeared the Katha of the Yayur Veda, Munduk of the Atharva Veda and the Mandukya Upanishad. All these Upanishads excepting the Mandukya were translated into English. The English translation of Isopanishad was published in 1816, of Munduk and Katha in 1819 and of Kena in 1823. Each book contained a preface and an introduction. These prefatory remarks are very valuable as they indicate the line of thoughts of the great reformer. He was feeling very uncomfortable at the mode of worship and the way of living of his own countrymen, which he found not in keeping with the ideals set before them by the ancient teachers of India. In a letter to his friend Digby who was then in England while he sent to him his English translation of the Abridgement of the Vedant and the Kena Upanishad he wrote in 1816:

“and also have found Hindoos in general more superstitious and miserable, both in performance of their

religious rites, and in their domestic concerns, than the rest of the nations known on the earth: I therefore, with a view of making them happy and comfortable both here and hereafter, not only employed verbal arguments against the absurdities of idolatry practised by them, but also translated their more revered theological work, namely Vedanta, into Bengali and Hindustani, and also several chapters of the Veds, in order to convince them that the unity of God, and absurdity of idolatry, are evidently pointed out by their own Scriptures."

The publication of these books created consternation in the orthodox circle. The citadel of Brahmanism was threatened with a vigorous assault and the interested persons roused up the passions of the uncultured masses, as the very basis of their religion had been challenged. Everywhere people talked of Rammohun and his challenge. Calcutta society was greatly agitated. In his letter to Mr. Digby, Rammohun mentioned the opposition he received from his countrymen, but by and by he succeeded in persuading some of them to enter into the spirit of his arguments. He thus reports: "several of my countrymen have risen superior to their prejudices; many are inclined to seek for the truth; and a great number of those who dissented from me have now coincided with me in opinion."

The Christian missionaries looked upon the rise of this reform movement with mixed feelings. Some of them thought that Rammohun was a half-Christian and he would soon become converted. In the Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society of 1816 an interesting sketch of Rammohun appeared. He is there described as a very rich Rarhee Brahman, a respectable Sanskrit scholar and well-versed in Persian; as possessing knowledge of English mathematical and metaphysical works. The notice further says: "He has published

in Bengalee one or two philosophical works, from the Sungskrita, which he hopes may be useful in leading his countrymen to renounce idolatry. Europeans breakfast at his house, at a separate table, in the English fashion; he has paid us a visit at Serampore, . . . . . He is at present a simple theist, admires Jesus Christ, but knows not the *need* of the atonement. He has not renounced his caste, and this enables him to visit the richest families of Hindoos. He is said to be very moral; but is pronounced to be a most wicked man by the strict Hindoos."

In noticing the Abridgement of the Vedant the *Missionary Register* of the Church of England referred to the influence that Rammohun exercised at that time; and wrote:

"He has spread his doctrine to a considerable extent and has several Hondoos of high caste and fortune in league with him, who maintain his opinions. They call themselves a society, and are bound by certain rules, one of which is, that no man shall be admitted into their number except with this condition, that he renounces idol worship. Of these rules, however, they do not seem to be very uniform in the observance."

We learn from the same source that Rammohun's followers at the time numbered about five hundred and that the Brahmans made two unsuccessful attempts on his life. The way in which Rammohun was carrying on his work became a concern of the Christian Missionaries. The following remark appeared in the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*:

"The rise of this new sect, the zeal and subtlety displayed by its founder, with its obvious tendency to undermine the fabric of Hindu superstition, are objects of serious attention to the Christian mind. Who knows, asks one of the friends from whom we have received these communications but this man may be one of the

many instruments by which God, in his mysterious providence, may accomplish the overthrow of idolatry? What may be the effect of this man's labours, says another correspondent, time will show. Probably they may bring the craft of Brahminism and caste into danger; and God may be in this manner shaking the kingdom of Satan. However, this may prove, that great work will be done; and though reason and philosophy may not have voice powerful enough to reach the heart of these poor captives, yet the Christian missionary whom Christ sends forth will find a mouth and tongue which no man shall be able to gainsay or to resist."

The *Christian Reformer* of 1818 contained a remarkable letter from Rev. T. Belsham, Minister of Essex Street Chapel, London, as an introduction to a letter he had received from a native convert to Christianity:

"It is very remarkable that while the great doctrine of the unity and unrivalled supremacy of God is thus gradually working its way among the poorer classes of natives in the vicinity of Madras, it is at the same time making a triumphant progress among the higher castes of Hindoos in the great and popular city of Calcutta. Rammohun Roy, a learned, eloquent and opulent Brahmin, having, by the proper exercise of his own understanding, discovered the folly and absurdity of the Hindoo mythology and of idol worship, was led by a conscientious sense of duty to proclaim this important discovery to his countrymen, and has publicly taught the doctrine of divine unity and perfection to the native Hindoos, and has entered his protest against their impious, barbarous and idolatrous rites. Such doctrine from a person of such exalted rank, at first excited great astonishment, and gave infinite offence. But by degrees the courage, eloquence, and perseverance of this extraordinary man prevailed over all opposition: and it is said that many hundreds of the native Hindoos, and



specially of the young people, have embraced his doctrine. He does not profess to be a Christian. He told a worthy clergyman at Calcutta about a year ago, that he preferred Christianity to all other religions, and would certainly embrace it, if it were not for the doctrine of the Trinity. This was an insurmountable obstacle. In the beginning of the year, 1817, he informed the same respectable clergyman, that he was now in the way of ascertaining whether the doctrine of the Trinity is or is not the doctrine of the New Testament: for that he and twenty other learned Brahmans had determined to sit down and study the Gospel with the greatest possible attention and impartiality, in order to discover their real meaning; and he did not think it possible that twenty serious and impartial inquirers, who sought after nothing but truth, and who earnestly implored divine illumination and direction, would be suffered to fall into an erroneous conclusion. The result of this inquiry has not yet reached England."

### **Controversy with the Hindu Pandits.**

The publications of Rammohun were widely circulated and men in different parts of India began to question their religious practices. The exposition of the pristine purity of the Hindu Theism in the ancient books like the Vedanta and the Upanishads found ready sympathy with the thoughtful people who had been disgusted with the avarice and unscrupulous methods of the priestly classes. But to practise the religion according to the ways of the Vedanta in opposition to the customs of ages required great courage, and this the common people were not expected to possess. Rammohun Roy's main intention in bringing the teachings of the Scriptures to the notice of the learned was that by this process he would be able to make his countrymen realise the necessity of worshipping God in the proper

spirit. It was a challenge to the orthodox and a few spirited attacks were made against his thesis. His books were noticed in the *Calcutta Gazette* and in other journals of the day. A letter appeared in the *Madras Courier* of December, 1816, bearing the name of Sankara Sastri, head English master in the Madras Government College. It was an apology for the existing system of the Hindus and a reply to the claims put forward by Rammohun in favour of the Theistic doctrines. He objected to Rammohun taking the title of *discoverer* and *reformer*. He also did not approve of the translation of the scripture into the vulgar language. The main objection of the Sastri was that a knowledge of the Invisible and Almighty Spirit was difficult to attain, and that holding of meetings, playing music etc., were ranked among carnal pleasures and were not ordained by scripture for mental purification. He tried to prove that the worship of the attributes and incarnations of God under various representation by means of consecrated objects was prescribed by the scripture to the human race by way of mental exercises. The attributes of God existed distinctly from God and the relationship between God and the attributes was like that of the king to his ministers. Finally there could be no strong objection to the worship of the attributes.

Rammohun published this letter along with a vigorous reply under the title, *A Defence of Hindoo Theism in reply to the attack of an Advocate for Idolatry at Madras*. It appeared in 1817. He exposed the weakness in the arguments of the learned Sastri and defended his theistic doctrines in a masterly way. The tract indicates his intellectual depth and his ability to shine in polemics. Like a shrewd advocate he first challenged his bonafides for starting the controversy in English. As a Hindu theologian he ought to have written in Sanskrit, and if he so desired, might have given a translation of it in English. Rammohun,

therefore, suspected that the letter might have been written by an Englishman. He then took up all the points in his letter and refuted them by referring to authority. He denied that he ever assumed the title of a 'reformer' or 'discoverer' and said: "I have urged in every work that so far from such an assumption, I have urged in every work that I have hitherto published, that the doctrines of the unity of God are real Hindooism, as that religion was practised by our ancestors, and as it is well-known even at the present age to many learned Brahmans". His main endeavour was to vindicate his own faith and the faith of his ancestors and to explain to his countrymen the true meaning of the sacred books. In his Introduction to the translation of the Kena Upanishad he wrote: "The work will, I trust, by explaining to my countrymen *the real spirit of the Hindoo scriptures which is but the declaration of the unity of God*, tend in a great degree to correct the erroneous conceptions which have prevailed with regard to the doctrines they inculcate". He wrote in the Preface to the Isopanishad that "Many learned Brahmans are perfectly aware of the absurdity of idol-worship, and are well informed of the nature of the pure mode of divine worship," and everywhere he asserted that his main mission was to correctly interpret the old Hindoo ideals and not to pose as a reformer. His explanation with regard to the title of reformer used by the *Calcutta Gazette* was:

"It is not impossible that from the perusal of the translations above alluded to, the Editor of the *Calcutta Gazette*, finding the system of idolatry into which the Hindoos are completely sunk, quite inconsistent with the real spirit of their scriptures, may have imagined that their contents had become entirely forgotten and unknown; and that I was the first to point out the absurdity of idol-worship, and to inculcate the propriety of the pure divine worship, ordained by their Vedas,

their Smritis, and their Puranas. From this idea, and from finding in his intercourse with other Hindus, that I was stigmatised by many, however unjustly, as an *innovator*, he may have been, not unnaturally, misled to apply to me the epithets of discoverer and reformer."

Sankara Sastri himself had admitted that the doctrine of the worship of the invisible God could be found in the scriptures, but why then idol-worship is practised? Rammohun says that the advocacy of idolatry "naturally leads to severe reflections on the selfishness which must actuate those Brahmanical teachers who, notwithstanding the unanimous authority of the Sastras for the adoption of pure worship, yet, with the view of maintaining the title of God which they arrogate to themselves and of deriving pecuniary and other advantages from the numerous rites and festivals of idol-worship, constantly advance and encourage idolatry to the utmost of their power." This was a scathing criticism of priestcraft. Brahmans naturally could not bear this assault on their rights. Rammohun was himself a Brahman and never openly disclaimed his caste. But he severely castigated the Brahmans for maintaining the system of idolatry against the teachings of the scriptures.

Another monopoly of the priests was attacked by the translation of the sacred books. Sankara Sastri said that translations were not correct and that in case of doubts reference had to be made to the original; consequently translations became useless. Secondly, he argued: "Reading the scripture in the vulgar languages is prohibited by the Puranas." Rammohun challenged this statement and cited the authority of Raghunandan who said: "He who can interpret, according to the ratio of the understanding of his pupils, through Sanskrit, or through the vulgar languages, or by means of the current language of the country, is entitled, spiritual father." The interpretation of the Sastras in the vulgar languages was not a new thing.

Rammohun denied the necessity of performing sacrifices and other ceremonies for the purpose of obtaining the knowledge of the divine nature. In reply to the argument that the attainment of the knowledge of the Invisible and Almighty Spirit is difficult Rammohun agreed with the view that it was difficult but he remarked: "to read the existence of the Almighty Being in his works of nature, is not, I will dare to say, so difficult to the mind of a man possessed of common sense, and unfettered by prejudice, as to conceive artificial images to be possessed, at once of the opposite natures of human and divine beings, which idolaters constantly ascribe to their idols, strangely believing that things so *constructed* can be converted by ceremonies into *constructors* of the universe."

Rammohun refused to admit that the worship of the attributes was prescribed by the Vedas. The ignorant are taught to worship the consecrated objects but if people in other lands could worship God directly without the assistance of consecrated objects why could not the men of Hindustan? Sankara Sastri described the attributes as so many ministers to God the king. The teaching of the Vedanta, however, was that "God has no second that may be possessed of eternal existence, either of the same nature with himself or of a different nature from him, nor any second of that nature that might be called either his part or his *quality*." Besides, the deities described in the Puranas are in many cases sensual beings destitute of morality. Such objects cannot be the attributes of God.

The practice of worshipping the idols has brought about a degradation of the character of the people. Rammohun gives examples of corruptions which have crept in and expresses a hope that the advocates of idolatry will change their view: "Having so far explained the nature of worship adopted by Hindoos in

general, for the propitiation of their allegorical attributes, in direct opposition to the mode of pure divine worship inculcated by the Vedas, I cannot but entertain a strong hope that the learned gentleman, who ranks even monotheistical songs among carnal pleasures, and consequently rejects their admittance in worship, will no longer stand forward as an advocate for the worship of separate and independent attributes and incarnations."

The defence of Hindu Theism put up by Rammohun was admirable in spirit and it should have disarmed all opposition. He had nothing but respect for the Hindu Sastras, and what he objected to was the corrupt practices maintained by the self-seeking priests. This was also the attitude of Martin Luther or even of Jesus himself. But people obsessed with age-long customs and long-standing prejudices could not appreciate the spirit of the great thinker who desired nothing but the restoration of Hinduism to its pristine purity. His honest endeavours to resuscitate the pure faith of the ancient Rishis of India met with opposition from many quarters.

The letter of Sankara Sastri and Rammohun's reply to it have been fully discussed. Another literary production which Rammohun took pains to reply was a tract entitled *Vedanta Chandrika* written in both Bengali and English by Mrityunjaya Vidyalankar, Head Pandit of the Government College, Calcutta. Rammohun replied both in Bengali and English. The reply in Bengali appeared as *Bhattacharyer Sahit Vichar* (controversy with Bhattacharya) and the English reply as *A second defence of the Monotheistical System of the Veds; in reply to An Apology for the present state of Hindoo Worship*. The writer of the *Vedanta Chandrika* used abusive and satirical language. As this was improper in a serious discussion on theological topics Rammohun refused to come down to his level. His attitude was

dignified when he said: "As to the satire and abuse, neither my education permits any return by means of similar language, nor does the system of my religion admit even a desire of unbecoming retaliation: situated as I am, I must bear them tranquilly."

He tore into shreds the tissue of false and fallacious arguments of the Pandit. He made a fine distinction between the meaning of the terms employed by the Sastras. The word *Karma* is interpreted by the orthodox as performance of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by the Sastras, but Rammohun would interpret them as works of moral merit. Idolatry was "a concession made to the limited faculties of the vulgar, with a view of remedying in some degree, the misfortune of their being incapable of comprehending and adopting the spiritual worship of the true God." He proved by reference to authority that "Idolatry, as now practised by our countrymen, and which the learned Brahman so zealously supports as conducive to morality, is not only rejected by the Sastras universally, but also must be looked upon with great horror by common sense, as leading directly to immorality and destructive of social comforts."

Rammohun was conscious of a great burden on himself on account of the practice of idolatry by his countrymen. The learned Brahman advised him not to be uneasy over the practice as it did not affect him. The reply of Rammohun was characteristic. That shows the nobility of his character. He said: "In thanking him for his trouble in offering me this counsel, I must, however, beg the learned Brahman to excuse me, while I acknowledge myself unable to follow it; and that for several reasons: *First*, A feeling for the misery and distress of his fellow creatures is, to every one not overpowered by selfish motives, I presume, rather natural than optional. *Secondly*, I, as one of

their countrymen, and ranked in the most religious sect, of course participate in the disgrace and ridicule to which they have subjected themselves, in defiance of their scriptural authority, by the worship of idols, very often under the most shameful forms, accompanied with the foulest language, and most indecent hymns and gestures. *Thirdly*, A sense of the duty which one man owes to another, compels me to exert my utmost endeavours to rescue them from imposition and servitude, and promote their comfort and happiness."

It was the keen sense of national degradation due to the practice of idolatry that goaded him to enlighten his countrymen about the system really sanctioned by the Sastras. Although he always referred to the Sastras he did not ignore the dictates of common sense. There he stands as a real leader of thought. The Sastras he revered but the value he attached to them was determined by a standard set up intuitively on the basis of reasoning and common sense. He ardently believed in the worship of true God. His idea of the worship is expressed clearly in the following passage:

"But, should adoration imply only the elevation of the mind to the conviction of the existence of the Omnipresent Deity, as testified by His wise and wonderful works, and continual contemplation of his power as so displayed, together with a constant sense of the gratitude which we naturally owe him, for our existence, sensation, and comfort,—I never will hesitate to assert, that his adoration is not only possible, and practicable, but even incumbent upon every rational creature."

His prayer to God was to release his countrymen from the degrading influence of idolatry and to purify their minds from the corruptions due to the immoral tales often repeated regarding the deities and to lead their hearts to that pure morality which was inseparable



from the true worship of God. This was Rammohun Roy and this was his mission. He maintained these ideas against his own people as well as against foreigners. India had a message of which they ought to be proud, but the Indians were oblivious of this message. Rammohun reminded his countrymen of this great message in his translations of the sacred books and in his controversy with the learned Brahmans.

## CHAPTER IV

### CAMPAIGN AGAINST SATI

#### **Sati a custom of the Hindus.**

The social system of the Hindus contained a number of iniquitous and inhuman practices, the most barbarous of which was the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their dead husbands. It was believed by the people that if a woman could die along with her husband she not only went to heaven but also saved her husband from perdition. The Smritis were cited as authority. The Rishis Anshira, Harit and Vishnu have sanctioned the practice of con cremation in the following passage :

“That woman who, on the death of her husband, ascends the burning pile with him, is exalted to heaven, as equal to Arundhati.

“She who follows her husband to another world, shall dwell in a region of joy for so many years as there are hair in the human body, or thirty-five millions.

“As a serpent-catcher forcibly draws a snake from his hole, thus raising her husband by her power, she enjoys delight along with him.

“The woman who follows her husband expiates the sins of three races: her father's line, her mother's line, and the family of him to whom she was given a virgin.

“There possessing her husband as her chiefest good, herself the best of women, enjoying the highest delights.

she partakes of bliss with her husband as long as fourteen Indras reign.

"Even though the man had slain a Brahman, or returned evil for good, or killed an intimate friend, the woman expiates those crimes.

"There is no other way known for a virtuous woman except ascending the pile of her husband. It should be understood that there is no other duty whatever after the death of her husband."

The cupidity of man was given the sanction of religion even after death and for his satisfaction his wife should follow him to the next world. This idea existed among many races and we find that among the ancient Egyptians it was the custom to bury the wives of a dead man along with his corpse. People had a very crude idea of soul and life and their next world contained all the elements of joys and pleasures of this. Religion consisted in a great measure of preparation for the next world. To a woman among the Hindus the husband is the greatest thing and she considers life a dead nothing without her husband. She has no position in the family except as a dependent, in whatever stage it may be. In childhood she depends upon father, in youth upon the husband and in old age upon the son or relatives. If she is told that she will enjoy heaven with her husband if she dies along with him naturally she prefers death to a degraded life in this world. In a state of helplessness and grief after the death of her husband her first impulse is to cast off this life and seek the company of her husband.

The custom of concremation was an old custom in India and it had a wide appeal when the Moslem rule was established in India. There was no security for widows and people considered it a great burden upon themselves to protect the honour of these helpless women. The religion of the conquered people could not think

of anything better than the extinction of life. When there is no joy in the present life there is possibly a great deal in store in the next. In any case it cannot be worse. This sub-conscious thought worked in the minds of the people and hallowed all their brutal practices.

Attempts were made in the past by some rulers to stop the practice; specially the name of Emperor Akbar should be mentioned in this connection. The Peshwa Baji Rao abolished it in his dominions and in many places it became unpopular on account of its inhumanity and the barbarous method of forcible burning resorted to in most cases. But still the practice continued in many places. When the Christian power was established in India it was hoped that this cruel custom would be suppressed. But the Government were afraid of interfering with the religious customs of the people lest this led to a revolution or defiance of authority. The policy of toleration was guided by the motive of safety to the revenue and dominion. A custom which the Moslem rulers could not eradicate the Christian governors did not venture to touch. But there were men and women endowed with finer sentiments who held the British Government responsible for perpetrating this cruel custom. Some stray Britishers here and there did their best to dissuade the people from such a course. There is a story that Job Charnak the founder of Calcutta, witnessed the scene of a woman being dragged to fire by her relatives. He forcibly snatched away the woman and when her people refused to take her back he carried her to his place and subsequently married her. The action of individual Europeans to save the lives of unfortunate women did not materially improve the situation. One official in Southern India touched a hornet's nest by attempting to save a woman. He had to face a riot of a big crowd for interfering with their religious practice. This happened in 1772.

In some places magistrates, on their own authority, refused to grant permission to the performance of *Sati*. Their action was approved of by the Government, although no definite regulation was issued. In the time of Lord Cornwallis, the Magistrate of Shahabad, on his own initiative, refused permission in a case in his district in 1789 and wrote a letter to the Governor-General soliciting approbation of his action. The letter gives a picture of the condition of things in those days:

“My Lord, Cases some times occur in which a Collector having no specific orders for the guidance of his conduct, is necessitated to act from his own sense of what is right. The assertion has this day been verified in an application from the relatives and friends of a Hindu woman, for my sanction to the horrid ceremony of burning with her deceased husband. Being impressed with a belief that this savage custom has been prohibited in and about Calcutta, and considering the same reasons for its discontinuance would probably be held valid throughout the whole extent of the Company’s authority, I positively refused my consent. The rites and superstitions of the Hindu religion should be allowed with the most unqualified tolerance, but a practice at which human nature shudders I cannot permit within the limits of my jurisdiction, without particular instructions. I beg, therefore, My Lord, to be informed whether my conduct in this instance meets your approbation.—I am, etc., M. H. Brooke, Collector, Shahabad, 28th January, 1789.

The Government of Lord Cornwallis had no other alternative than to approve of the conduct of their subordinate officer in the particular case but they did not gather courage to authorise the prevention of such ceremonies by coercion. They wrote in their reply to Mr. Brooke that they did “not deem it advisable to authorise him to prevent the observance of it by coercive measures, or by any exertion of his official powers; as

the public prohibition of a ceremony, authorised by the tenets of the religion of the Hindus, and from the observance of which they have never been restricted by the ruling power, would in all probability tend rather to increase than diminish their veneration for it, and consequently prove the means of rendering it more prevalent than it is at present."

The Government could not stop the practice by force neither did they feel themselves sufficiently strong to oppose a system sanctioned by religion. It was a trying situation for good officers in the districts, who could not exceed the instructions of the authorities nor could they turn deaf to the pricking of conscience. A case happened in 1805 during the government of Lord Wellesley, similar to that in 1789. Mr. Elphinstone, a Magistrate of Behar, prevented the death of a young widow of twelve years and asked for definite instructions from the Government. A move was then made by the Government to ascertain legal opinion by referring the matter to the Nizamat Adalat. There were Pandits to advise the Adalat about the Hindu law and one of these Pandits gave his advice, the purport of which is as follows :

Women who desire to join their husbands in the funeral pyre can do so provided they have no infant children to look after, they are not pregnant or are not in the period of menstruation, or are not minors. This rule applies to women of all castes. If a woman having an infant child can make proper arrangements for the rearing up of the child can burn herself along with the dead body of her husband. But it is against the Sastras or customs to apply drugs or intoxicants and to make a woman lose her senses. Before she performs con-cremation a woman has to take the solemn oath and to perform some other ceremonies. If a woman performs the ceremony of concremation then she enjoys

the company of her husband in heaven for as many years as there are hair on the body, *i.e.*, for three and half crore of years.

The name of the Pandit who gave this advice was Ghanashyam Sarma. In reply to further enquiries he said: A woman who desists from performing the ceremony may be taken back by her people if she has not taken the solemn oath; but if after taking the solemn vow she refuses to burn herself then she shall have to pay heavy penalties, and on the performance of the purification ceremony after paying the penalty she may be taken back. Government did not do anything beyond ascertaining the views of the Pandits. Some instructions were sent to the officials in the light of the advice received, but no rules were drawn up for their guidance. The matter remained in this condition till 1812. Eminent administrators like Wellesley, Cornwallis, Barlow and Minto gave their support to the horrid practice for fear of wounding religious susceptibilities.

### **Government policy defined.**

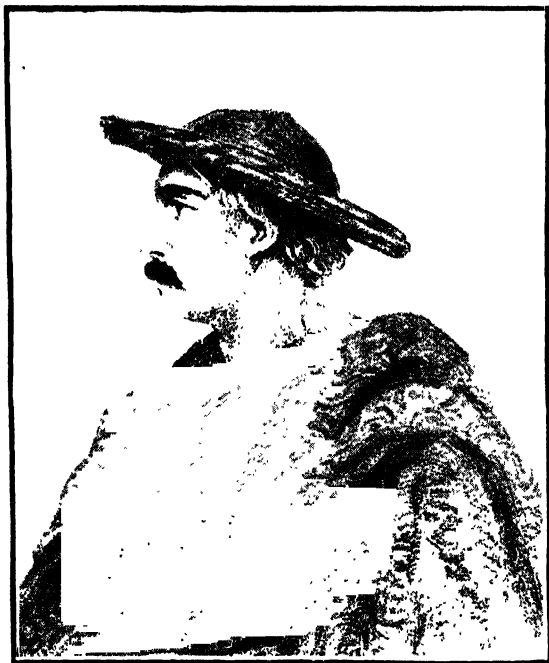
Down to 1812 Government did not in any way interfere in the practice of Sati. That year a magistrate of Bundelkhund wrote a letter to the Registrar of the Nizamat Adalat on the 3rd of August. He wrote that he failed to stop a case of Sati in his district, and he was doubtful about his position in the absence of definite instructions from the Government. The Nizamat Adalat referred the matter to the Governor-General who after long deliberations issued a number of instructions on the 17th April, 1813. The instructions followed the lines of least resistance. The legality of the practice was not questioned and only precautions were to be taken that no force was applied and that widows in certain cases, *e.g.*, in pregnancy, below the age of sixteen, or having

infant children, should not be allowed to perform the ceremony. In no case should a woman be drugged or intoxicated or should be dragged into the pyre against her free will.

The enquiries made by the Nizamat Adalat elicited the information that the practice was held tenaciously by the Hindus and that they would resent very much any interference with an institution which they considered a part of their religion. But in places where the sense of morality was high the custom was gradually dying out; this was noticed in the province of Tirhut. In some districts the custom prevailed mainly amongst Brahmans and Kayasthas but it was not so common among the other castes. The Adalat noticed that several practices had been stopped by the Hindu rulers. Government was desirous to know whether the practice of Sati could be stopped without wounding religious feelings. The information obtained did not encourage the Government to take any bold step. In 1815 attempts were made to collect regular statistics and details of cases. Police and magistrates became more active in preventing forcible burning. The Government of the Marquis of Hastings issued a series of instructions for the guidance of the officers in 1817. But these rules and regulations were not sufficiently effective to stop the practice. The evil had taken deep root, and it required the awakening of a strong social consciousness to eradicate the canker which was eating the very vitals of the nation. This work could be undertaken by Indians with influence with the people. In the absence of independent Hindu rulers who could adjust the social problems in the light of new culture and education the task of reformation had to be undertaken by thoughtful leaders. Rammohun had felt the inhumanity of the custom; a case had occurred in his own family when the widow of his elder brother Jagamohun committed suicide by burning herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband in 1811.



During his stay in Calcutta he talked with many friends about the custom and would visit the cremation grounds to dissuade the intending Satis from such a course. But he was ridiculed by the orthodox members of the funeral parties as they thought that he was trying to undermine the religious system. Rammohun found as his coadjutor in this humane work, Babu Dwarkanath Tagore an influential member of the Calcutta society. A petition was got up and submitted to the Governor-General in 1818 to take measures to



DWARKANATH TAGORE

stop the inhuman practice. The orthodox members of the community had already submitted a petition to

withdraw the regulation issued by the Government. The petition sent up by the liberal party challenged the representative character of the signatories to the previous petition. That the number of the reforming party was increasing could not be denied, but it is difficult to say what was the exact position of the parties. The basis of the orthodox movement was that the custom was bound up with the religion of the Hindus and that any interference with it would affect considerably the religious life of the people. The advisers of the Government were mostly of this view. Rammohun Roy took up the challenge and applied himself to prove that although the practice was sanctioned by some authorities a better course of life than self-immolation was prescribed by other authorities of equal, if not more important, position. The method he employed to refute the fallacious arguments of the Pandits was to hold discussion with the people and to publish literature on the subject. He had faith in the intellectual honesty of his people who he thought were misguided by the interested parties. His vast knowledge of the Hindu Sastras cleared up the mystery of the age-long practice. The books he published were in the form of dialogues between an advocate for and an opponent of the practice. The books were published originally in Bengali with a view to enlighten his countrymen about the right course and then translated into English to inform the Europeans about the sanctions behind the practice. These publications dispelled the ignorance of the people and gave them new ideas to think about. The first tract was published in 1818 and the second tract in Bengali in 1819 and the English translation in 1820, which was dedicated to the Marchioness of Hastings. Such dedication would not have been possible unless the Marchioness had shown her interest in the affairs of the helpless widows.

An attempt was made by the Government to ascertain the effects of the regulations. A number of

Christian philanthropists urged the British Parliament to abolish the custom and the Directors of the East India Company were approached to take the necessary steps. In 1821 a Blue Book was published in which the history of the practice and the endeavours made to eradicate or reduce it were fully discussed. A statement appeared in that document regarding the number of cases in the different districts. A general summary of the cases from 1815 to 1818:

	1815	1816	1817	1818	Total
Division of Calcutta . . . .	253	289	442	544	1528
„ Dacca . . . .	31	24	52	58	165
„ Murshidabad . . . .	11	21	42	30	104
„ Patna . . . .	29	29	49	57	164
„ Benares . . . .	48	65	103	137	353
„ Bareilly . . . .	15	13	19	14	61
	387	441	707	840	2375

The statement quoted above shows that instead of reducing the number the issue of the Government regulations had increased the number of cases. It was noticed that the practice was very largely followed in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, and the two districts of Burdwan and Hughly were responsible for the largest numbers. In explaining the causes of such cases Mr. H. Oakley, Magistrate of Hughly said that in Calcutta there was an excess of profligacy and immorality of conduct and the worshippers of Kali, who indulged in drinking and other immoral practices considered the burning of Sati as a choice entertainment rather than as a religious act. The worship of Kali was not very popular in other districts and consequently the number of Satis in those places were comparatively small. With regard to the sudden rise the magistrate said that it was

possibly due to the interference of the Government. The Government regulation was in a way legalising the practice, and people found that the Sastras sanctioning the inhuman practice were recognised by the Government. The Governor-General therefore suspended any further action. The Marquis of Hastings retired in 1823: for a short time Mr. Adam acted in his place and then Lord Amherst came out as Governor-General. None of them ventured to take a forward step.

The evil remained in all its ugly forms. In spite of the regulations force was applied and the widows were in most cases dragged. In a book written by J. Peggs entitled "*The Sutte's Cry to Britain*" published in 1828, heart-rending tales of many cases are given. The following graphic account gives a vivid picture:

"The use of force by means of bamboos, is, we believe, universal through Bengal. It is intended to prevent the possibility of the widow's escape from the flames, as such an act could be thought to reflect indelible disgrace on the family."

"In the burning of widows as practised at present in some parts of Hindustan, however voluntary the widow may have been in her determination, force is employed in the act of immolation. After she has circumambulated and ascended the pile, several natives leap on it, and pressing her down on the wood, bind her with two or three ropes to the corpse of her husband, and instantly throw over the two bodies, thus bound to each other, several large bamboos, which being firmly fixed to the ground on both sides of the pile prevent the possibility of her extricating herself when the flames reach her. Logs of wood are also thrown on the pile, which is then inflamed in an instant."

The scene of a Sati was witnessed by Mrs. Fanny Parks in the course of her wanderings at Allahabad. The

story she narrated in the interesting book she published in England in 1850, entitled "*Wanderings of a Pilgrim in search of the Picturesque, during the four and twenty years in the East; with revelations of life in the Zenana.*" An extract from this book is given below :

"A rich buniya, a corn chandler, whose house was near the gate of our grounds, departed this life; he was an Hindoo. On the 7th of November, (1828), the natives in the bazar were making a great noise with their tom-toms, drums, and other discordant musical instruments, rejoicing that his widow had determined to perform suttee, *i.e.*, to burn on the funeral-pile.

"The magistrate sent for the woman, used every argument to dissuade her and offered her money. Her only answer was, dashing her head on the floor, and saying, 'If you will not let me burn with my husband, I will hang myself in your court of justice.' The shastras say, 'The prayers and imprecations of a suttee are never uttered in vain; the great gods cannot listen to them unmoved.'

"If a widow touch either food or water from the time her husband expires until she ascend the pile, she cannot, by Hindu law, be burned with the body; therefore, the magistrate kept the corpse for *forty-eight* hours, in the hope that hunger would compel the women to eat. Guards were set over her, but she never touched anything. My husband accompanied the magistrate to see the suttee: about 5,000 people were collected together on the banks of the Ganges: the pile was then built, and the putrid body placed upon it; the magistrate stationed guards to prevent the people from approaching it. After having bathed in the river, the widow lighted a brand, walked round the pile, set it on fire, and then mounted cheerfully; the flame caught and blazed up instantly: she sat down, placing the head of the corpse on her lap, and repeated several times the

usual form,' 'Ram, Ram, suttee; Ram, Ram, suttee'; i.e., 'God, God, I am chaste.'

"As the wind drove the fierce fire upon her, she shook her arms and limbs as if in agony; at length she started up and approached the side to escape. An Hindoo, one of the police who had been placed near the pile to see, she had fair play, and should not be burned by force, raised his sword to strike her, and the poor wretch shrank back into the flames. The magistrate seized and committed him to prison. The woman again approached the side of the blazing pile, sprang fairly out, and ran into the Ganges, which was within a few yards. When the crowd and the brothers of the dead man saw this, they called out, 'Cut her down, knock her on the head with a bamboo; tie her hands and feet, and throw her in again'; and rushed down to execute their murderous intentions when the gentlemen and the police drove them back.

"The woman drank some water, and having extinguished the fire on her garment, said she would mount the pile again and be burned.

"The magistrate placed his hand on her shoulder (which rendered her impure), and said, 'By your own law, having once quitted the pile you cannot ascend again; I forbid it. You are now an outcast from the Hindoos, but I will take charge of you, the Company will protect you and you will never want food or clothing.'

"He then sent her, in a palanquin, under a guard, to the hospital. The crowd made way, shrinking from her with signs of horror, but returned peaceably to their homes; the Hindoos annoyed at her escape, and the Mussalmans saying, 'It was better that she should escape, but it is a pity we should have lost the *tamasha* (amusement) of seeing her burnt to death.'

"Had not the magistrate and the English gentlemen been present, the Hindoos would have cut her down when

she attempted to quit the fire; or had she leapt out, would have thrown her in again, and have said, 'She performed suttee of *her own accord*, how could *we* make her? It was the will of God.' As a specimen of their religion the woman said, 'I have transmigrated six times, and have been burned six times with six different husbands; if I do not burn the seventh time, it will prove unlucky for me.' 'What good will burning do you?' asked a bystander. She replied, "The women of my husband's family have all been suttees, why should I bring disgrace upon them? I shall go to heaven, and afterwards reappear on earth, and married to a very rich man, She was about twenty or twenty-five years of age, and possessed of some property, for the sake of which her relatives wished to put her out of the world."

The writer says that the *Sati* took place on the banks of the Ganges, under the Bund between the Fort and Raj Ghat, a spot reckoned very holy and fortunate for the performance of the rite. The woman had a house and about 800 rupees which the brothers of her deceased husband were anxious to obtain for themselves. Mrs. Parks states that she saw similar incidents in the vicinity of Calcutta and people would run to see the *tamasha*. People had no consciousness that the case was one of murder and by witnessing it they were but abetting it. On the other hand, the orthodox Hindoos considered a *Sati* who burned herself as an honour to the community.

### Rammohun Roy and the Sati.

It has already been mentioned that Rammohun Roy was so oppressed with the sense of pain at the inhuman practice of the burning of widows that he used to visit the cremation grounds to argue with the parties and to prevent such deeds, if possible. A petition was sent to the Government in 1818 asking for measures against the

practice and it is believed that Rammohun had a hand in drafting it. It was signed by a large number of respectable people of Calcutta and drew the attention of the Government to the horrible state of things connected with the practice as is found from the following passage :

“Your petitioners are fully aware from their own knowledge or from the authority of credible eye-witnesses that cases have frequently occurred when women have been induced by the persuasions of their next heirs, interested in their destruction, to burn themselves on the funeral pile of their husbands; that others who have been induced by fear to retract a resolution rashly expressed in the first moments of grief, of burning with their deceased husbands have been forced upon the pile and there bound with ropes, and pressed with green bamboos until consumed with the flames; that some, after flying from the flame, have been carried back by their relations and burnt to death. All these instances, your petitioners humbly submit are murders according to every Shastra, as well as to the common sense of all nations.”

The same year Rammohun published his first tract. It was in the form of a conference between an advocate for and an opponent of the practice of widow-burning. Rammohun Roy took his stand upon the Sastras which the Hindus mainly relied upon. He felt that there was no other method of convincing the people of the illegality of the practice except the citation of Sastras, but he explained that every Sastra did not possess equal authority. The custom of widow-burning was sanctioned by Harit, Angira and others, but Rammohun argued on the authority of Vrihaspati that the opinion of Manu was superior to that of any other: “Whatever law is contrary to the law of Manu is not commendable.” The Vedas also have shown preference for Manu. In case of conflict between Manu and any other authority the former should



be respected. Harit and others have, no doubt, prescribed con cremation but Manu has laid down the living of a pure and austere life after the death of husband. The advocate of widow-burning argues that to live the life of an ascetic was merely an alternative, but in the view of the opponent the two things were contradictory of each other and they could not be alternatives; con cremation was inconsistent with living as an ascetic. The practice of con cremation comes out of the desire to enjoy a comfortable life after death. The desire of future fruition is inferior to the faith in God which leads to absorption in one thing and it is written in the Kathopanishad that "He who for the sake of reward practices rites is dashed away from the enjoyment of eternal beatitude." This is also taught in the Bhagavad Gita, which is considered as the essence of all the Smritis.

In reply to the argument that if the Sastras prescribing con cremation were not to be followed then these Sastras must be teaching deception, Rammohun says there is no deception: "The object of these passages is declared. As men have various dispositions, those whose minds are enveloped in desire, passion and cupidity, have no inclination for the disinterested worship of the Supreme Being. If they had no Sastras of rewards, they would at once throw aside all Sastras, and would follow their several inclinations, like elephants unguided by the hook. In order to restrain such persons from only being led by their inclinations, the Sastra prescribes various ceremonies." Here we find the synthetic mind of Rammohun working. He did not condemn any practice outright but tried to understand its application in special circumstances. He cited the passage from the Upanishad regarding the comparative value of knowledge and rites: "Knowledge and rites together offer themselves to everyman. The wise man considers which of these two is the better and which the worse. By reflecting, he becomes convinced of the

superiority of the former, despises rites, and takes refuge in knowledge. And the unlearned, for the sake of bodily gratifications, has recourse to the performance of rites." Those who perform rites for the sake of rewards return to the world and cannot obtain absorption, as has been said in the Bhagavad Gita.

The advocate for *Sati* then may take his stand behind the long-standing tradition of the race. The custom, however old it might be, could not justify an immoral act. Moreover, the binding of the widow to the pile was against the Sastra which prescribed that a widow after taking the *Sankalpa* (resolution) should ascend the burning pile. But in practice she was tied to the pile before the pile was on fire. This was nothing else but female murder. "In those Sastras such female murder is altogether forbidden. And reason also declares, that to bind down a woman for her destruction, holding out to her the inducement of heavenly rewards, is a most sinful act." Here Rammohun combines reason with Sastric sanction. The advocate urges concremation on the ground that otherwise the widow might go astray. The danger of going astray exists also in the life-time of husband; to avoid this danger he says: "Control alone cannot restrain from evil thoughts, words, and actions; but the suggestions of wisdom and the fear of God may cause both man and woman to abstain from sin. Both the Sastras and experience show this."

Rammohun was not a believer in mere Sastra unless that was verified by experience. When experience proves the truth of Sastra it becomes acceptable. It was his firm faith that "By forsaking prejudices and reflecting on the Sastra, what is really conformable to its precepts may be perceived, and the evils and disgrace brought on this country by the crime of female murder will cease."

Rammohun carried on his propaganda against the *Sati* in his second tract published in 1819. He examined

every argument in detail with the help of authorities and ruthlessly criticised the advocates of the inhuman practice: "Female murder, murder of a Brahman, parricide and similar heinous crimes, cannot be reckoned amongst pious acts by alleging the custom of the country in their favour; by such customs rather the country in which they exist is itself condemned." He condemned the practice in strong language: "The practice, therefore, of forcibly tying down women to the pile, and burning them to death, is inconsistent with the Sastras, and highly sinful. It is of no consequence to affirm, that this is customary in any particular country—if it were universally practised, the murders would still be criminal. The pretence that may be followed in matters where no particular rules are prescribed in the Sastras, is not to be justified by the practice of a few."

The advocates alleged that the people became respectable by the practice of *Sati*. Rammohun's answer was: "Respectability and want of respectability, depend upon the acts of men. If people of this province, who have been constantly guilty of the wilful murder of women by tying them to the pile in which they are burnt, are to be reckoned among the respectable, then why should not the inhabitants of mountains and forests be also reckoned good, who perpetrate murder for the sake of livelihood, or to propitiate their cruel deities."

The arguments of the advocates are summed up in the following passage:

"That women are by nature of inferior understanding, without resolution, unworthy of trust, subject to passions, and void of various knowledge; they, according to the precepts of the Sastra, are not allowed to marry again after the demise of their husbands, and consequently despair at once of all worldly pleasure; hence it is evident that death to these unfortunate widows

is preferable to existence; for the great difficulty which a widow may experience by living a purely ascetic life, as prescribed by the Sastras, is obvious; therefore, if she do not perform concremation, it is probable that she may be guilty of such acts as may bring disgrace upon her paternal relations, and those that may be connected with her husband. Under these circumstances, we instruct them from their early life in the idea of Concremation, holding out to them heavenly enjoyments in company with their husbands, as well as the beatitude of their relations, both by birth and marriage, and their reputation in this world. From this many of them, on the death of their husbands, become desirous of accompanying them; but to remove every chance of their trying to escape from the blazing fire, in burning them we first tie them to the pile."

Rammohun had learnt to respect women and could not tolerate the condemnation of the sex. His reply to the arguments quoted above was a noble defence worthy of the best champion of the rights of women. The passage is rather long but it deserves to be quoted in full:

"The reason you have now assigned for burning widows alive is indeed your true motive, as we are well aware; but the faults which you have imputed to women are not planted in their constitution by nature; it would be, therefore, grossly criminal to condemn that sex to death merely from precaution. By ascribing to them all sorts of improper conduct, you have indeed successfully persuaded the Hindoo community to look down upon them as contemptible and mischievous creatures, whence they have been subjected to constant miseries. I have, therefore, to offer a few remarks on this head:

"Women are in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy consequently the male part of the

community, taking advantage of their corporeal weakness, have denied to them those excellent merits that they are entitled to by nature, and afterwards they are apt to say that women are naturally incapable of acquiring those merits. But if we give the subject consideration, we may easily ascertain whether or not your accusation against them is consistent with justice. As to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse him of the want of understanding? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority. On the contrary, Lilavati, Bhanumati, the wife of the prince of Karnat, and that of Kalidasa, are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Sastras: moreover in the Vrihad-aranyaka Upanishad of the Yajur Veda it is clearly stated that Yajnavalka imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Maitreyi, who was able to follow and completely attain it!

“*Secondly*, You charge the women with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised: for we constantly perceive in a country where name of death makes the male shudder, that the female from her firmness of mind offers to burn with the corpse of her deceased husband; and you accuse those women of deficiency in point of resolution.

“*Thirdly*, With regard to their trustworthiness, let us look minutely into the conduct of both sexes, and we may be enabled to ascertain which of them is the most frequently guilty of betraying friends. If we enumerate such women in each village or town as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed

by women, I presume the number of deceived women could be found ten times greater than that of betrayed men. Men are, in general able to read and write, and manage public affairs, by which means they easily promulgate such faults as women occasionally commit, but never consider as criminal the misconduct of men towards women. One fault they have, it must be acknowledged; which is by considering others as equally void of duplicity as themselves, to give their confidence too readily, from which they suffer much misery, even so far that some of them are misled to suffer themselves to be burned to death.

*“In the fourth place*, with respect to their subjection to the passions this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes; for one man may marry two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards; while a woman, who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all worldly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic.

*“Fifthly*, The accusation of their want of virtuous knowledge is an injustice. Observe what pain, what slighting, what contempts, and what afflictions their virtue enables them to support: How many Kulin Brahmans are there who marry ten or fifteen wives for the sake of money, that never see the greater number of them after the day of marriage, and visit others only three or four times in the course of their life. Still amongst those women, most, even without seeing or receiving any support from their husbands, living dependent on their fathers or brothers, and suffering much distress, continue to preserve their virtue; and when Brahmans, or those of their tribes, bring their wives to live with them what misery do the women not suffer? At marriage the wife is recognised as half of her husband, but in after-conduct they are treated worse than inferior

animals. For the woman is employed to do the work of a slave in the house, such as, in her turn, to clean the place very early in the morning, whether cold or wet, to scour the dishes, to wash the floor, to cook night and day, to prepare and serve food for her husband, father, mother-in-law, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, and friends and connections (for amongst Hindoos more than in other tribes relations long reside together, and on this account quarrels are more common amongst brothers respecting their worldly affairs). If in the preparation or serving of the victuals they commit the smallest fault, what insult do they not receive from their husband, their mother-in-law, and the younger brothers of their husband? After all the male part of the family have satisfied themselves, the women content themselves with what may be left, whether sufficient in quantity or not. Where Brahmans or Kayasthas are not wealthy, their women are obliged to attend to their cows, and to prepare the cow-dung for firing. In the afternoon they fetch water from the river or tank, and at night perform the office of menial servants in making the beds. In case of any fault or omission in the performance of those labours they receive injurious treatment. Should the husband acquire wealth, he indulges in criminal amours to her perfect knowledge and almost under her eyes, and does not see her perhaps once a month. As long as the husband is poor, she suffers every kind of trouble, and when becomes rich, she is altogether heart-broken. All this pain and affliction their virtue alone enables them to support. Where a husband takes two or three wives to live with him, they are subjected to mental miseries and constant quarrels. Even this distressed situation they virtually endure. Sometimes it happens that the husband, from a preference for one of his wives, behaves cruelly to another. Amongst the lower classes, and those even of the better class who have not associated with good company, the wife, on the slightest fault, or

even on bare suspicion of her misconduct, is chastised as a thief. Respect to virtue and their reputation generally makes them forgive even this treatment. If unable to bear such cruel usage, a wife leaves her husband's house to live separately from him, then the influence of the husband with the magisterial authority is generally sufficient to place her again in his hands; when, in revenge for her quitting him, he seizes every pretext to torment her in various ways, and some times even puts her privately to death. These are facts occurring every day, and not to be denied. What I lament is, that seeing the woman thus dependent and exposed to every misery, you feel for them no compassion, that might exempt them from being tied down and burnt to death."

In his conversations and in his relations with his people Rammohun Roy used always to refer to women with highest respect and tried his best to improve their condition. He upheld the rights of women against the common prejudices of his countrymen and for this noble work he was in risk of his life. In order to continue the subject we deviate from the plan of narrating the incidents of his life in chronological order and give a connected account of the movements leading to the final abolition of the evil.

### **Lord William Bentinck.**

The cruel custom of burning the widows had the sanction of antiquity and the approbation of the Hindu people. The alien rulers did not venture to touch it lest thereby they incurred the displeasure of the Hindus and stood the chance of losing their revenue and empire. The custom could have been stopped if the Nizamat Adalat had given rulings on the lines indicated by Rammohun Roy. No special legislation would have been necessary in that case. But the judiciary depended upon their Pandits for the interpretation of law and the legal



advisers were orthodox people. The regulations issued by the Government of the Marquis of Hastings had the desired effect in some districts but in many places the Hindus increased their efforts to defend their practice by adding to the number of the cases. The Government circular had its reaction upon the orthodox community; Ram-mohun Roy was virulently attacked and he was considered an outcaste. The Government was taken aback by this sudden outburst of feelings. Lord Hastings had a desire to put his instructions in the form of a definite code but the agitation of the people stood in his way. His successors also did not feel encouraged to legislate upon the matter. Lord Minto had ordered in 1813 that information of an intended Sati had to be given to the nearest magistrate and his consent had to be taken before the performance of the rite. What prudent Governors did not venture to undertake that was accomplished by a bold sympathetic Englishman.

Lord William Bentinck was Governor of Madras from 1803 to 1807 but he was removed from his office on account of his failure to suppress the Mutiny at Vellore. He came back to India as the Governor-General in 1828. He was a conscientious man and felt it his duty to promote the welfare of the Indians. On his arrival in India he undertook an enquiry into the practice of Sati and on the basis of the information received he resolved to put a stop to the cruel system with an iron hand. He consulted many eminent persons including the Marquis of Hastings. In reply to his enquiry the late Governor-General wrote:

“The subject which you wish to discuss is one which must interest one’s feelings most deeply, but it is one of most extreme nicety when I mention that in one of the years during my administration of government in India above 800 widows sacrificed themselves within the Provinces comprised in the Presidency of Bengal, to

which number I very much suspect that very many not notified to the magistrates should be added. I will hope to have credit for being acutely sensible to such an outrage against humanity. At the same time I was aware how much danger might attend the endeavouring to suppress forcibly a practice so rooted in the religious belief of the natives. No men of low caste are admitted into the ranks of the Bengal Army. Therefore the whole of the formidable body must be regarded as blindly partial to a custom which they consider as equally referrible to family honour and to points of faith. To attempt the extinction of the horrid superstition without being supported in the procedure by a real concurrence on the part of the army would be distinctly perilous. I have no scruple to say that I did believe I could have carried with me the assent of the army towards such an object. That persuasion, however, arose from circumstances which gave me peculiar influence over Native Troops."

Similar views were expressed by Lord Amherst who shrank from a bold step lest thereby the native troops might lose their confidence in the good faith of the Government and produce a situation which the Government might not be able to control. The fear of a popular rising and a mutiny among the troops deterred them from eradicating the evil which every one felt as inhuman. Lord William Bentinck ascertained the views of the officers regarding the attitude of the troops. A confidential letter was addressed to forty-nine officers who were likely to give the best information and who were in touch with the Indian troops. The replies received were very encouraging; twenty-four officers supported the idea of immediate suppression by the Government, twelve supported abolition but were not in favour of direct Government action, eight advocated abolition by the interference of magistrates, while only five were opposed to any interference with the practice.

These replies, however, assured the Government that there was no fear of a rising of the troops, and therefore the objection of the previous rulers did not hold good. As regards popular discontent Lord William Bentinck began to sound the leading men.

The propaganda of Rammohun Roy had done some good. In his despatch of August 15, 1822, Lord Hastings attached great importance to the movement for reforms at the instance of the people themselves when he wrote: "his lordship in council does not despair of the best effects resulting from the free discussion of the matter by the people themselves, independently of European influence and interposition." He expected that by this means the sentiments of the people would gradually change and the custom would die a natural death. Bishop Heber recorded in his *Journal* in 1824, on the information supplied to him by Dr. Marshman of the Baptist Mission—"the Brahmans have no longer the power and popularity which they had when he first remembers India, and among the laity many powerful and wealthy persons agree, and publicly express their agreement, with Rammohun Roy in reprobating the custom/ which is now well known to be not commanded by any of the Hindu sacred books, though some of them speak of it as a meritorious sacrifice." The statistics of the cases as given in the next page show that there was a gradual falling off in the number.

The rate of gradual decline was not steady and at times the number of cases suddenly increased. The judges of the Nizamat Adalat had expressed their view that no coercion should be adopted by the Government. But they changed their opinion. In 1826, two judges of the Adalat insisted on immediate and entire prohibition, but the Council were not prepared to take such a hasty step. They were willing to prohibit the practice in the districts where the regulations were not in force.

# A STATEMENT OF THE CASES OF SATI

From 1819 to 1828.

Division	NUMBER OF CASES IN THE YEAR											
	1819,	1820,	1821,	1822,	1823,	1824,	1825,	1826,	1827,	1828		
Calcutta - - -	421	370	391	328	340	373	398	324	337	308		
Dacca - - -	55	51	52	45	40	40	101	65	49	47		
Murshidabad - -	25	21	12	22	13	14	21	8	9	10		
Patna - - -	40	42	69	70	49	59	47	65	55	55		
Benares - - -	92	93	104	102	121	76	55	48	49	33		
Bareilly - - -	17	20	15	16	12	10	17	8	18	10		
	650	597	654	583	575	572	639	518	517	463		

Lord Amherst was on the other hand averse to total suppression and desired to wait a few years more for the public opinion to grow. The insistent request of the judges for legislation did not receive the approbation of Lord Amherst who was looking up to the time when as a result of the general instruction and the exertions of the local officers the barbarous rite would be extinguished at no distant date. On the assumption of powers by Lord William Bentinck the judges definitely asked for immediate abolition. There was one dissentient in 1828, but the next year all the five judges unanimously urged the permanent suppression. Their opinion was shared by most of the responsible officers of the Government. There was no means of ascertaining the opinion of the Indian public as there was no representative institution then in existence. Lord Bentinck had heard of Rammohun Roy as the greatest advocate of abolition. He sent for him for advice. There is an interesting story about the invitation to Rammohun, which was narrated by the Rev. Dr. K. S. MacDonald, then Principal of the General Assembly's Institution, at a meeting in 1879, on the information supplied to him by Ananda Chandra Basu, the oldest pupil then living of Rammohun:

"Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General, on hearing that he would receive considerable help from the Rajah in suppressing the pernicious custom of widow-burning, sent one of his *aides-de-camp* to him expressing his desire to see him. To this the Rajah replied, "I have now given up all worldly avocations, and am engaged in religious culture and in the investigation of truth. Kindly express my humble respects to the Governor-General and inform him that I have no inclination to appear before his august presence, and therefore I hope that he will kindly pardon me." These words the *aide-de-camp* conveyed to the Governor-General, who enquired, "What did you say to Rammohun Roy?"

The *aide-de-camp* replied, "I told him that Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General, would be pleased to see him." The Governor-General answered: "Go back and tell him again that Mr. William Bentinck will be highly obliged to him if he will kindly see him once." This the *aide-de-camp* did and Rammohun Roy could no longer refuse the urgent and polite request of his lordship."

The incident shows that Rammohun Roy did not feel flattered at the invitation to see the Governor-General, and that he was not anxious to be in touch with the officials. But Lord William Bentinck appreciated the services rendered by this great reformer and held him in great respect. Because of the value he attached to his opinion he wanted to meet him as a man to another man and not as the high authority in India. This is an indication of his genuine desire to promote the welfare of the people. About this interview the *India Gazette* of July 27, 1829, noted:

"An eminent native philanthropist who has long taken the lead of his countrymen on this great question has been encouraged to submit his views of it in a written form, and has been subsequently honoured with an audience by the Governor-General, who, we learn, has expressed his anxious desire to put an end to a custom constituting so foul a blot."

The news that the Governor-General was bent upon suppressing the practice created a consternation in the orthodox community. The *Samachar Chandrika* considered this as a bad news and requested Lord William Bentinck not to interfere with a practice sanctioned by religion. The advocates of the system tried to represent that the evidence and opinion of Rammohun Roy could not be accepted as authoritative as he had renounced his faith in the Hindu religion and usages. But there were still a number of Hindus who gave full support

to the work of Rammohun. There was a learned Brahman named Gaurisankar Tarkavagis who edited a paper entitled *Sambad Bhaskar*. He wrote in his paper in 1849 that he attended a meeting in the Government House, and there he spoke against the practice of Sati in the presence of five to six thousand persons. He thoroughly identified himself with the programme of Rammohun Roy. The Hindu community was thus divided into two camps, the party of Rammohun and those against him. Rammohun Roy took up his stand on the ground that the practice was not sanctioned by the Sastras, specially the best Sastras, and even those Sastras which sanctioned the practice did not prescribe any use of force which was the usual method adopted.

Lord William Bentinck felt sufficiently strong to stop the practice because he was convinced of the iniquity as explained to him by Rammohun Roy, in whose scholarship he had implicit faith. When he had thoroughly prepared his ground Bentinck submitted his proposal to the Council in perfect confidence of the expediency and safety of the abolition. The Governor-General wrote out a long Minute on November 8, 1829. Extracts from the Minute are given below in view of the importance of the subject:

“Whether the question is to continue or to discontinue the practice of *Sati*, the decision is equally surrounded by an awful responsibility. To consent to the consignment year after year of hundreds of innocent victims to a cruel and untimely end when the power exists of preventing it is a predicament which no conscience can contemplate without horror. But, on the other hand, if heretofore received opinions are to be considered of any value, to put to hazard by a contrary course the very safety of the British Empire in India, and to extinguish at once all hopes of those great improvements—affecting the condition not of hundreds and

thousands but of millions—which can only be expected from the continuance of our supremacy, is an alternative which even in the light of humanity itself may be considered as a still greater evil. It is upon this first and highest consideration alone, the good of mankind, that the tolerance of this inhuman and impious rite can in my opinion be justified on the part of the Government of a civilised nation. While the solution of this question is appalling from the unparalleled magnitude of its possible results, the considerations belonging to it are such as to make even the stoutest mind distrust its decision. On the one hand, Religion, Humanity, under the most appalling form, as well as vanity and ambition—in short, all the powerful influences over the human heart—are arrayed to bias and mislead the judgment. On the other side, the sanction of countless ages, the example of all the Mussulman conquerors, the unanimous concurrence in the same policy of our own most able rulers, together with the universal veneration of the people, seem authoritatively to forbid, both to feeling and to reason, any interference in the exercise of their natural prerogative. In venturing to be the first to deviate from this practice it becomes me to show that nothing has been yielded to feeling, but that reason, and reason alone, has governed the decision.

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“Prudence and self-interest would counsel me to tread in the foot-steps of my predecessors. But in a case of such momentous importance to humanity and civilisation that man must be reckless of all his present or future happiness who could listen to the dictates of so wicked and selfish a policy. With the firm undoubting conviction entertained upon this question, I should be guilty of little short of multiplied murder if I could hesitate in the performance of this solemn obligation. I have been already stung with this feeling. Every day’s delay adds a victim to the dreadful list, which might



perhaps have been prevented by a more early submission of the present question. But during the whole of the present year much public agitation has been excited, and when discontent is abroad, when exaggerations of all kinds are busily circulated, and when the native army have been under a degree of alarm lest their allowances should suffer with that of their European officers, it would have been unwise to give a handle to artful and designing enemies to disturb the public peace.

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“I think it will clearly appear from the perusal of the documents annexed to this Minute, and from the facts which I shall have to adduce, that the passive submission of the people to the influence and power beyond the law—which in fact and practically may be and is often exercised without opposition by every public officer—is so great that the suppression of the rite would be completely effected by a tacit sanction alone on the part of Government. This mode of extinguishing it has been recommended by many of those whose advice has been asked; and no doubt this in several respects might be a preferable course, as being equally effectual while more silent, not exciting the alarm which might possibly come from a public enactment, and from which in case of failure it would be easy to retreat with less inconvenience and without any compromise of character. But this course is clearly not open to the Government, bound by Parliament to rule by law and not by their good pleasure. Under the present position of the British Empire, moreover, it may be fairly doubted if any such underhand proceeding would be really good policy. When we had powerful neighbours and had greater reason to doubt our own security, expediency might recommend an indirect and more cautious proceeding, but now that we are supreme my opinion is decidedly in favour of an open, avowed and general prohibition, resting altogether upon the moral goodness

of the act and our power to enforce it; and so decided is my feeling against any half-measures that were I not convinced of the safety of total abolition I certainly should have advised the cessation of all interference."

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After carefully examining the opinion of Horace Wilson he referred to Rammohun Roy :

"Mr. Wilson thinks that the attempt to put down the practice will inspire extensive dissatisfaction. I agree also in this opinion. He thinks that success will only be partial, which I doubt. He does not imagine that the promulgated prohibition will lead to any immediate or overt act of insubordination, but that affrays and much agitation of the public mind must ensue. But he conceives that once they suspect that it is the intention of the British Government to abandon this hitherto inviolate principle of allowing the most complete toleration in matters of religion that there will arise in the minds of all so deep a distrust of our ulterior designs that they will no longer be tractable to any arrangement intended for their improvement, and that the principle of a purer morality, as well as of a more virtuous and exalted rule of action, now actively inculcated by European education and knowledge, will receive a fatal check. I must acknowledge that a similar opinion as to the probable excitation of a deep distrust of our future intentions (as mentioned to me in a conversation by that enlightened native, Rammohun Roy, a warm advocate for the abolition of *Sati* and of all other superstitions and corruptions engrafted on Hindu religion, which he considers originally to have been a pure Deism. It was his opinion that the practice might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police. He apprehended that any public enactment would give rise to general apprehension, that the reasoning would be, while the English were con-

tending for power they deemed it politic to allow universal toleration and to respect our religion, but having obtained the supremacy their first act is a violation of their profession, and the next will probably be, like the Muhammadan conquerors, to force upon us their own religion.' "

Lord William Bentinck weighed all the arguments and took the bold step of suppressing the *Sati* and wrote in the concluding part of this historic Minute :

"The first and primary object of my heart is the benefit of the Hindus. I know nothing so important to the improvement of their future condition as the establishment of a purer morality, whatever their belief, and a more just conception of the will of God. The first step for this better understanding will be dissociation of religious belief and practice from blood and murder. They will then, when no longer under this brutalising excitement, view with more calmness acknowledged truths. They will see that there can be no inconsistency in the ways of Providence, that to the command received as divine by all races of men, 'No innocent blood shall be spilt' there can be no exception; and when they shall have been convinced of the error of this first and most criminal of their customs, may it not be hoped that others, which stand in the way of their improvement, may likewise pass away, and that thus emancipated from those chains and shackles upon their minds and actions, they may no longer continue, as they have done, the slaves of every foreign conqueror, but that they may assume their first places among the great families of mankind? I disown in these remarks, or in this measure, any view whatever to conversion to our own faith. I write and feel as a legislator for the Hindus, and as I believe many enlightened Hindus think and feel.

"Descending from these higher considerations, it cannot be a dishonest ambition that the Government of

which I form a part should have the credit of an act which is to wash out a foul stain upon British rule, and to stay the sacrifice of humanity and justice to a doubtful expediency; and finally as a branch of the general administration of the Empire, I may be permitted to feel deeply anxious that our course shall be in accordance with the noble example set to us by the British Government at home, and that the adaptation, when practicable to the circumstances of this vast Indian population, of the same enlightened principles, may promote here as well as there the general prosperity, and may exalt the character of our nation."

Shortly after the publication of the Minute the Government issued the Regulation on December 4, 1829, 'declaring the practice of *Sati*, or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus, illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts.' The agitation which was carried on for so many years produced the required results through the robust optimism of the Governor-General. The attitude of Rammohun Roy at the last stage has been misinterpreted. He supported wholeheartedly the measure for suppression, but in the interests of the Government he felt that it would have been much better if the practice could be stopped on the basis of his interpretation of the Sastras without resort to a fresh legislation by the Government, which was likely to be interpreted by the Hindus as an interference with their religion. His views were therefore embodied in the preamble of the Regulation, which ran as follows:

"The practice of *Suttee*, or of burning or burying the widows of Hindoos, is revolting to the feelings of human nature; it is nowhere enjoined by the religion of Hindoos as an imperative duty; on the contrary, a life of purity and retirement on the part of the widow is more especially and preferably inculcated, and by a vast majority of the people throughout India the practice is

not kept up nor observed; in some extensive districts it does not exist; in those in which it has been most frequent it is notorious that in many instances acts of atrocity have been perpetrated which have been shocking to the Hindoos themselves, and in their eyes unlawful and wicked."

This preamble bears ample mark of the influence of Rammohun in shaping the policy of the Government. A departure was made in the policy of the Government but there was sufficient justification for the step taken. In the absence of a Hindu Government which could have adjusted the practice of the people according to *Dharma* and reason it was incumbent upon the alien Government to resort to the procedure of legislation and in their action they were amply supported by men like Dwarkanath Tagore and Rammohun Roy. The Indian press carried on a campaign to discredit Rammohun Roy and to prove that he did not belong to the Hindu community. The *Samachar Chandrika* wrote in its issue of the 12th December that the Governor-General had been misled and said that the chief supporter of abolition was Rammohun Roy. To show that he was not a leader of the Hindus the paper wrote: "He no doubt was born in the Hindu family, but how could he represent all or majority of the Hindus. He cannot claim to represent his own forefathers or the clan not to speak of the community." The orthodox leaders set up an agitation against the Regulation, persuaded the common people to believe that the Government might withdraw the Regulation if the real feelings of the Hindus could be properly represented. A petition was drafted and signed and forwarded to the Governor-General. One petition bore the signature of 652 residents of Calcutta and along with it was forwarded the opinion of 120 Pandits; another petition bore the signature of 346 distinguished men of the suburbs and it was accompanied by the opinion of 28 Pandits. A deputation of 12 gentlemen

waited upon the Governor-General on the 14th January, 1830. The names of the gentlemen forming the deputation as given in the *Chandrika* were Nimaichand Siromani, Haranath Tarkabhushan, Bhawanicharan Banerjee, Gopimohun Deb, Radhakanta Deb, Maharaja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Nilmani De, Gokulnath Mullik, Bhawanicharan Mitra and Ramgopal Mullik. Lord William Bentinck received the deputation in the Council House and gave a reply on the lines of the preamble of the Regulation. He said that it was not enjoined by the Sastras that the widows must burn themselves. He did not attack the Hindu religion and if they did not submit to the interpretation of the laws by him they could appeal to the King in Council. A largely attended meeting was held in the Sanskrit College on Sunday the 17th January to consider the reply of the Governor-General. It was decided in the meeting that an appeal should be submitted to the King-in-Council. A committee of 12 persons was formed to draw up the appeal. For the purpose of discussing religious questions it was decided to secure a common meeting place and for the expenses to be incurred in this connection the sum of Rs. 11,260 was subscribed on the spot. In the same meeting it was discussed that Hindus who went against the orthodox practices should be discarded from the community, and nobody should dine or have any relation with them, but at that meeting no names were mentioned. This was an open threat to Rammohun Roy and he had to organise forces against this sinister movement. He led another deputation to the Governor-General on the 16th January. An address in Bengali was read out by Babu Kalinath Roy and it was then translated into English. The Governor-General received the address in the Town Hall of Calcutta. The concluding portion of the address ran as follows:

“We are, my lord, reluctantly restrained by the consideration of the nature of your exalted situation,

from indicating our inward feelings by presenting any valuable offerings as commonly adopted on such occasions; but we should consider ourselves highly guilty of insincerity and ingratitude, if we remained negligently silent when urgently called by our feelings and conscience to express publicly the gratitude we feel for the everlasting obligation you have graciously conferred on the Hindu community at large. We however, are at a loss to find language sufficiently indicative of a small portion of the sentiments we are desirous of expressing on the occasion; we must, therefore, conclude this address with entreating that your Lordship will condescendingly accept our most grateful acknowledgement for this act of benevolence toward us, and will pardon the silence of those who, though equally partaking of the blessing bestowed by your Lordship, have through ignorance or prejudice omitted to join us in this common cause."

The Governor-General gave a suitable reply to the address signed by 300 Hindus. This demonstrated that there was sufficient support behind Rammohun Roy. In reply to the opinion of the Pandits Rammohun Roy published his third pamphlet with the title "Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning of the Widows, considered as a religious rite." It is a masterly survey of the whole situation. The arguments of the opponents of abolition were mercilessly refuted and finally he concluded:

"We should not omit the present opportunity of offering up thanks to Heaven, whose protecting arm has rescued our weaker sex from cruel murder, under the cloak of religion, and our character, as a people, from the contempt and pity with which it has been regarded, on account of this custom, by all civilised nations on the surface of the globe."

The orthodox party organised the Dharma Sabha as a counterblast to the Brahma Sabha established by Ram-

mohun Roy with a view to maintain the purity of Hinduism. They desired to erect a hall but decided not to start the operation till they collected Rs. 20,000. But their most pressing business was to send an appeal to the King-in-Council against the Regulation of Bentinck. Rammohun Roy was present in England when the case was taken up by the Privy Council (June, 1832). On hearing arguments on both sides the Council dismissed the appeal and the action of the Government of India received its final seal of approbation.

In opposition to the appeal of the advocates for the *Sati* a petition was submitted by the party of Rammohun to the House of Commons to confirm the Regulation. The views expressed in the address to Lord William Bentinck were repeated and the address itself was reproduced in the petition. These two documents express the true attitude of Rammohun towards the policy finally shaped by Lord Bentinck. In the address to Lord Bentinck it was said:

"In consideration of circumstances so disgraceful in themselves and so incompatible with the principles of British rule, your Lordship in Council fully impressed with the duties required of you by justice and humanity, has deemed it incumbent on you, for the honour of the British name, to come to the resolution, that the lives of your female Hindoo subjects should be henceforth more efficiently protected; that the heinous sin of cruelty to females may no longer be committed, and that the most ancient and purest system of Hindoo religion should not any longer be set at nought by the Hindoos themselves. The magistrates, in consequence, are, we understand, positively ordered to execute the resolution of Government by all possible means."

The same sentiments found expression in the petition:



“That your petitioners cannot permit themselves to suppose that such a practice, abhorrent to all the feelings of nature, the obligations of society, and the principles of good government, will receive the sanction of your Honourable House, much less that, having been abolished, the British name and character will be dishonoured by its re-establishment.”

In the history of the abolition of the inhuman custom of the *Sati* the name of Rammohun will for ever remain connected with that of Bentinck. But for his exposition of the illegal practices of the perpetrators of the crime committed in the name of religion no Government would have dared to interfere with such a long standing usage. Rammohun assured that there was no religious sanction behind the custom and after the enactment of the measure he did his best to enlist the support and sympathy of his countrymen in favour of the reform. He carried on the campaign for more than a decade and had the satisfaction of seeing in his lifetime the removal of a disgrace on the Hindu community. For this humanitarian work the Indians will for ever remain grateful to him. His countrymen organised a series of persecutions at the time but they have now come to appreciate the services rendered by their hero in rescuing them from their disgrace. When the final decision of the Privy Council was known in India a public meeting was held in the hall of the Brahma Samaj, and the grateful appreciation of the services of Rammohun was recorded.

## CHAPTER V

# CHRISTIANITY INTERPRETED

### The Precepts of Jesus.

Rammohun was always eager to learn and to find out the best means of developing spiritual life. He had his initiation in the faith of the unity of God at Patna where he came in contact with Islam. This faith was deepened by his study of the Vedantic literature at Benares, and his outlook was broadened by his extensive journey in and outside India. The oriental thoughts were abstract and philosophic and the young Rammohun was in intellectual sympathy with the broad ideas underlying the different systems. He had felt the unity of the spiritual hankering of the human soul in whatever clime it might be. By coming in contact with Mr. Digby and forming closer acquaintance with Christian literature of Europe he began to appreciate the humane aspect of the teachings of Jesus. In forwarding his translation of the Upanishads he wrote in a letter to Mr Digby: "The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truths has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and more adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which have come to my knowledge."

He was not satisfied with the English version of the Bible and in order to study it in the original he learnt Greek and Hebrew. His knowledge of Arabic helped him in acquiring proficiency in the difficult language of

the Old Testament in six months. He gained the first hand knowledge of both the Old and New Testament and formed a comprehensive analysis of the doctrines of the Christ. In order to give the people the benefit of his views regarding these doctrines he compiled the "Precepts of Jesus" from the four Gospels. The book was printed at the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, in 1820. In this book he separated the moral teachings of Jesus from the anecdotes of miracles and other supernatural incidents. The orthodox Christians in Calcutta and Serampore pinned their faith in these miracles and believed in the Trinity. They became furious at the way in which a non-Christian attempted to represent the true mission of their master whom they considered as no other than God and the Son of God. Rammohun explained his views in the Introduction which is reproduced here:

"A conviction in the mind of its total ignorance of the nature and of the specific attributes of the Godhead, and a sense of doubt respecting the real essence of the soul, give rise to feelings of great dissatisfaction with our limited powers, as well as with all human acquirements which fail to inform us on these interesting points. On the other hand, a notion of the existence of a supreme superintending power, the author and preserver of this harmonious system, who has organised and who regulates such an infinity of celestial and terrestrial objects, and a due estimation of that law which teaches that man should do unto others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature, and tend to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind. The former of these sources of satisfaction, *viz.*, a belief in God, prevails generally; being derived either from tradition and instruction, or from an attentive survey of the wonderful skill and contrivance displayed in the works of nature. The latter, although it is partially taught also in every system of religion with

which I am acquainted, is principally inculcated by Christianity. This essential characteristic of the Christian religion I was for a long time unable to distinguish as such, amidst the various doctrines I found insisted upon in the writings of Christian authors, and in the conversation of those teachers of Christianity with whom I have had the honour of holding communication. Amongst these opinions, the most prevalent seems to be, that no one is justly entitled to the appellation of Christian who does not believe in the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, as well as in the divine nature of God, the Father of all created beings. Many allow a much greater latitude to the term Christian, and consider it as comprehending all who acknowledge the Bible to contain the revealed will of God, however they may differ from others in their interpretations of particular passages of Scripture; whilst some require from him who claims the title of Christian, only an adherence to the doctrines of Christ, as taught by himself, without insisting or implicit confidence in those of the Apostles, as being, except when speaking from inspiration, like other men, liable to mistake and error. That they were so, is obvious from the several instances of differences of opinion amongst the Apostles recorded in the Acts and Epistles.

"Voluminous works, written by learned men of particular sects for the purpose of establishing the truth, consistency, rationality, and priority of their own peculiar doctrines, contains such variety of arguments, that I cannot hope to be able to adduce here any new reasonings of sufficient novelty and force to attract the notice of my readers. Besides, in matters of religion particularly men in general, through prejudice and partiality to the opinions which they once form, pay little or no attention to opposite sentiments (however reasonable they may be) and often turn a deaf ear to what is most consistent with the laws of nature, and conformable to the dictates of human reason and divine revelation. At

the same time, to those who are not biased by prejudice, and who are, by the grace of God, open to conviction, a simple enumeration and statement of the respective tenets of different sects may be a sufficient guide to direct their inquiries in ascertaining which of them is most consistent with the sacred traditions, and most acceptable to common sense. For these reasons, I decline entering into any discussion on those points, and confine my attention at present to the task of laying before my fellow-creatures the words of Christ, with a translation from the English into Sanscrit, and the language of Bengal. I feel persuaded that by separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament, the moral precepts found in that book, these will be more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions and degrees of understanding. For, historical and some other passages are liable to the doubts and disputes of free-thinkers and anti-Christians, especially miraculous relations, which are much less wonderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the native of Asia, and consequently would be apt, at best, to carry little weight with them. On the contrary, moral doctrines, tending evidently to the maintenance of the peace and harmony of mankind at large, are beyond the reach of metaphysical perversion, and intelligible alike to the learned and to the unlearned. This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which he has lavished over nature, and is also so well-fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in the present form."

The humane side of religion which attempted to elevate the conduct of man in his relations with his fellow-beings was beyond all controversy, as in this matter there appeared to be some unanimity. The teachings of Jesus laid adequate emphasis upon this point and Rammohun desired that this aspect of Christianity should be widely known. The way in which the Gospel was presented by the Christian theologians and missionaries was likely to make the personality of Jesus more mysterious than real, and there was likelihood of difference of opinion. He therefore stood upon the solid ground of moral teachings and separated them from dogmas, traditions and fictions, which could not stand the scrutiny of scientific enquiry. Rammohun was many years in advance of his times. The analytical study of the scriptures had at that time made very little progress, and he had therefore to confront the opposition of some of the missionaries who could not proceed very far beyond the traditions and dogmas. As his interpretation of the philosophy of the Hindus raised a bitter controversy amongst the Brahmans and the Pundits so his attempt to interpret the teachings of Christ was greatly resented by the missionaries in India. They were looking upon him as a prospective member of their Church. They found him to be a great admirer of Jesus and was expecting that his conversion into Christianity was not very remote. The publication of the Precepts of Jesus disillusioned them, and Dr. Marshman, a Baptist Missionary at Serampore, attacked him in the *Friend of India* and described him as a heathen.

### Appeal to the Christian Public.

The book was received by the missionaries at Serampore with indignation. A review appeared in the *Friend of India* (Vol. III, No. 23, February, 1820) from a missionary, and it was followed by some remarks of

the editor (Dr. Marshman). Extracts made here from the editorial notes show the attitude of the Baptist missionaries:

"This work while it furnishes an overwhelming proof of the truth and excellence of the Sacred Scriptures, since an intelligent heathen whose mind is as yet completely opposed to the *grand design* of the Saviour's becoming incarnate, feels constrained to acknowledge that the precepts of Jesus the Saviour, are so fully consonant with truth and righteousness, so exactly suited to the circumstances of mankind—those of his countrymen, as well as those of the western world, lend so evidently, 'to maintain the peace and harmony of mankind . . . . the manner in which this is done, as is justly observed by our highly esteemed correspondent, may greatly injure the cause of truth.' "

It was further stated in the course of the notice that it would "degrade the Redeemer of the world to a level with Confucius or Mahomet, and to contemplate him as a Teacher and Founder of a Sect, instead of adoring him as the Lord of all, the Redeemer of men, the Sovereign Judge of quick and dead."

In the comments regarding the Precepts of Jesus he was described as "the Deist and Infidel." The unkind remarks made by the missionaries led Rammohun to compose "An Appeal to the Christian Public in defence of The Precepts of Jesus."

He felt insulted at the term "heathen" used towards him and therefore repudiated the charge against him in a dignified manner:

"Before however I attempt to inquire into the ground upon which their objections to the work in question are founded, I humbly beg to appeal to the public against the unchristianlike, as well as uncivil manner in which the Editor has adduced his objections to the compilation,

by introducing personality, and applying the term of *heathen* to the Compiler. I say unchristianlike manner, because the Editor, by making use of the term *heathen*, has, I presume, violated truth, charity, and liberality, which are essential to Christianity in every sense of the word. For there are only two methods by which the character of the Compiler as a *heathen*, or as a believer in one true and living God, can be satisfactorily inferred. The most reasonable of the two modes is to confine such inquiries to the evidence contained in the subject of review, no mention of the name of the compiler being made in the publication itself. Another mode, which is obviously inapplicable in such discussions, is to guess at the real author, and to infer his opinions from a knowledge of his education or other circumstances. With respect to the first source of evidence, the following expression of the Compiler's sentiments are found in the Introduction: 'A notion of the existence of a supreme, superintending Power, the Author and Preserver of the harmonious system, who has organised and who regulates such an infinity of celestial and terrestrial objects, and a due estimation of that Law which teaches that man should do to others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature &c.' "

After quoting some more passages indicating his opinions he further said:

"These expressions are calculated, in my humble opinion, to convince every mind not biassed by prejudice, that the Compiler believed not only in one God, whose nature and essence is beyond comprehension, but in the truths revealed in the Christian system. I should hope neither the Reviewer nor the Editor can be justified in inferring the *heathenism* of the Compiler, from the facts of his extracting and publishing the moral doctrines of the New Testament, under the title of "A Guide to peace and happiness"—his styling the Precepts of Jesus, a code



of religion and morality—his believing God to be the Author and Preserver of the universe—or his considering these sayings as adapted to regulate the conduct of the whole human race in the discharge of all the duties required of them.”

The writers in the *Friend of India* took exception to separating the moral teachings of Christ from the religious and historical parts. They thought that this process was likely to cause more harm than good to the cause of Christianity. Rammohun called himself a follower of Christ and they expected that one day he would accept the Gospel in its entirety. They were sadly disappointed at the rational representation of the teachings from the Bible as distinguished from the mysterious. Rammohun tried to answer all the points raised in the review in a well-reasoned essay of 20 pages. In defence of his method he said.

“It has been the different interpretation of the dogmas that has given rise to such keen disputes amongst the followers of Jesus. They have not only destroyed harmony and union between one sect of Christians and another, and continue to do so; but in past times have even caused continual wars and frequent bloodshed to rage amongst them, more dreadfully than between Christians and infidels. A slight reference to the histories of Christian countries, will, I trust, afford to my readers entire conviction upon this head. Besides, the Compiler, residing in the same spot where European missionary gentlemen and others for a period of upwards of twenty years have been, with a view to promote Christianity, distributing in vain amongst the natives numberless copies of the complete Bible, written in different languages, could not be altogether ignorant of the causes of their disappointment. He, however, never doubted their zeal for the promulgation of Christianity, nor the accuracy of their statement with regard to immense

sums of money being annually expended in preparing vast numbers of copies of Scriptures; but he has seen with regret, that they have completely counteracted



*John Keble*

their own benevolent efforts, by introducing all the dogmas and mysteries taught in Christian churches to people by no means prepared to receive them; and that they have been so incautious and inconsiderate in their

attempts to enlighten the natives of India, as to address the instructions to them in the same way as if they were reasoning with persons brought up in a Christian country, with those dogmatical notions imbibed from their infancy. The consequence has been, that the natives in general, instead of benefiting by the perusal of the Bible, copies of which they always receive gratuitously, exchange them very often for blank paper; and generally use several of the dogmatical terms in their native language as a mark of slight in an irreverent manner, the mention of which is repugnant to my feelings."

He was actuated by the motive to promote the welfare of mankind and tried to preach such lessons best calculated to lead mankind to universal love and harmony. He was conscious that he could not persuade people to accept his views by his influence or power nor was he in a position to distribute situations nor any friends or colleagues to recommend others to their patronage. This was the usual missionary method to win new converts. To explain his own position he said:

"Humble as he is, he has therefore adopted those measures which he thought most judicious to spread the truth in an acceptable manner; but I am sorry to observe, that he has unfortunately and unexpectedly met with opposition from those whom he considered the last persons likely to oppose him on this subject."

Rammohun Roy looked at religion from the standpoint of truth and tried to present it in the best way acceptable to his countrymen. His love for the teachings of Jesus was not prompted by any hope of worldly gain, but in his extensive studies and search for aids to spiritual life he found them of great value. The missionaries could hardly appreciate the broad and catholic standpoint of Rammohun who was not a slave to any

dogma or creed. He was a free-thinker and was pained whenever freedom was in anyway compromised. The opponents carrying on the controversy with him had other motives. Their method of work was in danger and they felt that their position would be greatly weakened if Rammohun interpreted the teachings of Jesus in such a liberal spirit. Their narrowness was evident when they called him a heathen. They were reluctant to call people not believing in the doctrine of Trinity anything but heathen. They divided men into three categories, *viz.*, Christians, Muhammadans and heathens.

After disposing of the points raised in the article in the *Friend of India* Rammohun concluded his first appeal by saying:

"May God render religion destructive of differences and dislike between man and man, and conducive to the peace and union of mankind."

Dr. Marshman reviewed this valuable document in a long article of 32 pages in the first number of the Quarterly Series of the *Friend of India*. About his method of approaching the subject there may be difference of opinion. He himself expressed doubts about the method he adopted. In Vol. II of *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* written by Dr. Marshman's son appears the following passage:

"In one of his letters during the controversy, he says, 'these are the only articles on divinity I have ever written, and some may be apt to think me, from the *Friend of India* more of a politician than a divine; yet the study of divinity is my highest delight.'"

The article in the *Friend of India* (Quarterly Series No. 1) maintained the old spirit of opposition. It opened with the following remarks:

“A few months ago when it was announced that a compilation from the four Gospels by a native of India, (it was supposed Rammohun Roy), was in the press, designed for the use of his countrymen, much interest was excited in all who had witnessed his laudable endeavours to expose the folly of the system of idolatry universally prevalent among his countrymen. The idea of a well-informed Hindoo's bearing witness to the authenticity and excellence of the Divine writings, and recommending them to the perusal of his countrymen as being able to make them win unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, delighted all who felt an interest in the happiness of their Indian fellow-subjects, and regarded their reception of the Sacred Oracles in all their divine authority, as the grand means by which this could be secured.

“In proportion however as the friends of religion were delighted with the idea of a Selection from the Sacred Scriptures by a Hindoo, which should impart to the minds of his countrymen ideas of their excellence, was this disappointment and regret, when they found that this compilation entitled ‘The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Happiness and Peace’ instead of exhibiting these precepts as a sample of the whole Scriptures and representing them as affording indubitable proof of the authenticity of its narratives and the reasonableness and importance of its doctrines, were in reality separated from that gospel of which they form so important a part, and held up as forming of themselves the way of life; an idea which perverts the grand design of the gospel, and frustrates the grace of God in the salvation of men the apostolic axiom applying with as great force now as ever, ‘If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain.’

“But great as was this disappointment, it was heightened by their perceiving that the Introduction to this

Compendium instead of treating with reverence the other parts of the Sacred Oracles, unhappily tended rather to impugn them, the reader being told that 'historical and some other passages are liable to doubts and disputes of free-thinkers and anti-christians, especially miraculous relations, which are much less wonderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently would be apt at best to carry little weight with them.' These hints respecting the rest of the Sacred Writings, particularly when taken in connection with the note added at the foot of the page as a specimen of these fabricated tales more wonderful than the miracles of Christ, 'That Ugusti is famed for having swallowed the ocean when it had given him offence, and for having restored it by urinary evacuation, and that at his command also the Vindya range of mountains prostrated itself and so remains'; appeared likely to convey ideas of them so contrary to that deep and just reverence with which both the doctrines and the miracles they contain must be regarded, if they become the means of salvation, that those who duly venerate the Sacred Oracles, could not but feel grieved that they should be thus held out to those who, despising idolatry for its grossness and folly, might probably be enquiring for something on which they might build their hopes of future happiness.' "

It is needless to enter here into the theological arguments. But we have to remember that the controversy created great interest both in India and England. In a letter to a friend in England Ranimohun wrote on September 5, 1820:

"As to the opinion intimated by Sir Samuel T — R, respecting the medium course in Christian dogmas, I never have attempted to oppose it. I regret only that the followers of Jesus, in general, should have paid much greater attention to enquiries after his nature than to

the observance of his commandments, when we are all aware that no human acquirements can ever discover the nature even of the most common and visible things, and, moreover, that such enquiries are not enjoined by the divine revelation.

“On this consideration I have compiled several passages of the New Testament which I thought essential to Christianity, and published them under the designation of Precepts of Jesus, at which the Missionaries at Shrirampoor have expressed great displeasure, and called me, in their review of the tract, an injurer of the cause of truth. I was therefore under the necessity of defending myself in an ‘Appeal to the Christian Public,’ a few copies of which tract I have the pleasure to send you, under the care of Captain S—and entreat your acceptance of them.”

In reply to the observations in the *Friend of India* Rammohun composed a more elaborate defence of his position in his Second Appeal. The essay has been very ably summarised in the following passage of Miss Collet’s *Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*:

“He repudiates any desire to challenge the credibility of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, or to put them on a level with the marvels of Hindu mythology. He had only recognised the fact that the Hindu mind was, as it were, sodden with stories of miracles, and he had hoped to direct his countrymen to those precepts, the moral sublimity of which had first moved him to admiration of Christianity. He describes himself by implication as ‘labouring in the promulgation of Christianity.’ He then opposes the main position advanced by Dr. Marshman. He disputes the consonance with justice of Dr. Marshman’s theory of atonement, but he declares that he has ‘repeatedly acknowledged Christ as the Redeemer, Mediator, and intercessor with God on behalf of his followers.’ He confesses himself

moved by his reverence for Christianity and its author to vindicate it from the charge of polytheism, for he regards Trinitarianism as essentially polytheism. He has little difficulty in disposing of Dr. Marshman's endeavours to prove the doctrine of Trinity from the Old Testament. On the New Testament he resorts to exegetical methods familiar to Unitarians, in order to establish the impersonality of the Holy Spirit. On the baptismal formula he avers that 'it is proper that those who receive the Christian religion, should be baptised in the name of the Father, who is the object of worship; of the Son, who is the Mediator; and of that influence by which spiritual blessings are conveyed to mankind, designated in the Scriptures as the Comforter, Spirit of Truth, or Holy Spirit.' He makes an excursion into pre-Nicene history and recalls how 'in the first and purest ages of Christianity, the followers of Christ entertained' very 'different opinions on the subject of the distinction Father, Son and Holy Spirit' without being excommunicated. The precepts of Jesus, which no other religion can equal, much less surpass, do not, he insists, depend on the metaphysical arguments and mysteries with which they have been associated."

Rammohun argued with the Christians as a follower of Christ as he argued with the Hindus as a true Hindu. From his firm faith in the doctrine of the unity of God he found in every religion the forces to unite but which unfortunately were not appreciated by the majority of the people. The Second Appeal was a very well-written essay of 173 pages. *The Friend of India* in noticing this book in No. 4 of the Quarterly Series (June, 1821) devoted 128 pages of that journal and condemned it by saying "It contains no less than an entire rejection of the doctrines of the Atonement, the Deity of Christ, and the ever-blessed Trinity." and ends by saying: "Let us then affectionately entreat him to reconsider the subject and peruse the Scriptures anew: and may the God of



all grace enable him to discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that he may in future determine 'to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified'—in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The controversy aroused a great deal of interest both in India and in Europe. Extracts from the tracts were published in different journals. A correspondent signing himself as "A Firm Believer in Christ" wrote in the *Calcutta Journal* (August, 1821):

"Here we observe an individual, born and bred in a country benighted under the most gross idolatry and superstition, who, by a just use of that understanding which our gracious Creator has given to mankind to guide them to all truths, having discovered the falsehood of that system of idolatry and the absurdity of those superstitions, conscientiously abandoned both, and thereby subjected himself to inconveniences and dangers of which persons living in more enlightened societies can hardly form an idea. Next, he directed his attention to the Christian religion; and that same just and honest use of his understanding, which discovered the falsehood and absurdity of idolatry and superstition, satisfied him that *Jesus* was the Messiah, that he was employed by God to reveal his will to men, and to make known to them the only true religion. He observed the internal and historical evidence of Christianity to be such as demonstrated its truth. Blessed with the light of Christianity, he dedicates his time and his money not only to release his countrymen from the state of degradation in which they exist, but also to diffuse among the European masters of his country, the sole true religion—as it was promulgated by Christ, his apostles and disciples."

In commenting upon the Second Appeal Miss Mary Carpenter writes in the *Last Days in England of Raja Rammohun Roy*:

“On these anonymous publications, Dr. Marshman, of Serampore College, published a series of animadversions which led to a remarkable reply from Rammohun Roy—the Second Appeal—with his name prefixed, which is distinguished by the closeness of his reasonings, the extent and critical accuracy of his scriptural knowledge, the comprehensiveness of his investigations, the judiciousness of his arrangement, the lucid statement of his own opinions, and the acuteness and skill with which he controverts the positions of his opponents.”

The critical essay in the *Friend of India* (Quarterly Series No. IV, June, 1821) evoked a still more remarkable composition under the title of *Final Appeal to The Christian Public*. The Baptist Mission Press of Calcutta, which had printed the previous publications refused to print it. Rammohun therefore was obliged to purchase types and get the book printed at the Unitarian Press, Dhurmtollah, under Indian supervision. The new press was not competent to undertake such a work and a number of errata crept into it. The *Final Appeal* appeared in January, 1823, and it consisted of vii-379 pages. In the preface Rammohun wrote:

“Notwithstanding the apprehension of exciting displeasure in the breasts of many worthy men, I feel myself obliged to lay before the public at large this my self-defence, entitled ‘A Final Appeal to the Christian Public.’ I, however, confidently hope that the liberal among them will be convinced, by a reference to the first part of this Essay, and to my two former Appeals, that the necessity of self-vindication against the charge of being an ‘injurer of the cause of truth,’ has compelled me, as a warm friend of that cause, to bring forward my reasons for opposing the opinions maintained by so large a body of men highly celebrated for learning and piety—a consideration which, I trust, will induce them to regard my present labours with an eye of indulgence.

"I am well aware that this difference of sentiment has already occasioned much coolness towards me in the demeanour of some whose friendship I hold very dear; and that this protracted controversy has not only prevented me from rendering my humble service to my countrymen by various publications which I had projected in the native languages, but has also diverted my attention from all other literary pursuits for three years past. Notwithstanding these sacrifices, I feel well satisfied with my present engagements, and cannot wish that I had pursued a different course; since, whatever may be the opinion of the world, my own conscience fully approves of my past endeavours to defend what I esteem the cause of truth.

"In my present vindication of the unity of the Deity, as revealed through the writings of the Old and New Testaments, I appeal not only to those who sincerely believe in the books of revelation, and make them the standard of their faith and practice, and who must, therefore, deeply feel the great importance of the divine oracles being truly interpreted; but I also appeal to those who, although indifferent about religion, yet devote their minds to the investigation and discovery of truth, and who will, therefore, not think it unworthy of their attention to ascertain what are the genuine doctrines of Christianity as taught by Christ and his apostles, and how much it has been corrupted by the subsequent intermixture of the polytheistical ideas that were familiar to its Greek and Roman converts, and which have continued to disfigure it in succeeding ages. I extend my appeal yet further; I solicit the patient attention of such individuals as are rather unfavourable to the doctrines of Christianity as generally promulgated, from finding them at variance with common sense, that they may examine and judge whether its doctrines are really such as they are understood to be by the popular opinion which now prevails."

He further desired to continue religious discussions carried on "with that temper and language which are considered by wise and pious men as most consistent with the solemn and sacred nature of religion, and more specially with the mild spirit of Christianity." He invited essays from Missionaries for the further study of the question, which would be printed in a monthly publication with a reply. He expressed his solicitude for independence of opinion and in a very significant passage concluded the Preface:

"As religion consists in a code of duties which the creature believes he owes to his Creator, and as 'God has no respect for persons; but in every *nation*, he that fears him and *works righteousness*, is accepted with him;' it must be considered presumptuous and unjust for one man to attempt to interfere with the religious observances of others, for which he well knows, he is not held responsible by any law, either human or divine. Notwithstanding, if mankind are brought into existence, and by nature formed to enjoy the comforts of society and the pleasures of an improved mind, they may be justified in opposing any system, religious, domestic, or political, which is inimical to the happiness of society, or calculated to debase the human intellect; bearing always in mind that we are children of ONE FATHER, 'who is above *all* and through *all* and in us *all*.' "

The book gave ample evidence of the author's close acquaintance with the scriptural texts and a high critical capacity. It is a marvel that he showed such skill in dealing with Biblical criticism before the method had made any progress in Europe. Dr. Marshman tried to refute his arguments in two laboured articles in the *Friend of India*. The first article appeared in Vol III, No IX in 98 pages and the second article in No XI of the same Quarterly series in 200 pages. He followed the same old orthodox method and failed to convince the public about the

justness of his cause. The friends of liberal religion in England published the *Precepts of Jesus* along with the Appeals to the Christian Public in a decent volume. An article by the celebrated Sismondi appeared in the *Revue Encyclopedique* for 1824, in which the labours of Rammohun were noticed in glowing terms. In course of the article it was written :

"A glorious reform has, however, begun to spread among the Hindoos. A Brahmin, whom those who know India agree in representing as one of the most virtuous and enlightened men, RAMMOHUN ROY, is exerting himself to restore his countrymen to the worship of the true God, and to the union of morality and religion. His flock is small, but increases continually. He communicates to the Hindoos all the progress that thought has made among the Europeans. He is among them, by a much juster title than the Missionaries, the Apostle of Christianity."

The opinion in India was no less favourable. In referring to his position and work the *Indian Gazette* wrote editorially :

"We say distinguished, because he is so among his own people, by caste, rank, and respectability; and among all men he must be distinguished for his philanthropy, his great learning, and his intellectual ascendancy in general." With regard to the controversy arising from the publication of the *Precepts of Jesus* the writer says that whatever other effects it may have caused, "it still further exhibited the acuteness of his mind, the logical power of his intellect, and the unrivalled good temper with which he could argue: 'it roused up' a most gigantic combatant in the theological field—a combatant who, we are constrained to say, has not met with his match here."

It is interesting to revert to the other side of the shield and to see what was the attitude of the Missionaries of Serampore and what was their opinion in the

end. We referred to a book entitled *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* written by J. C. Marshman, the son of the famous editor, published in 1859. A full extract is made from that book here:

“In the course of the previous and the present year, Dr. Marshman was drawn into a controversy with Rammohun Roy, on the doctrine of the Atonement. This great Hindoo reformer, who had vigorously exposed the prevailing superstitions of his fellow countrymen, now came forward to assail the fundamental doctrines of Christianity in a publication entitled ‘the Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Happiness and peace.’ He maintained that the monotheistic system of the Vedant was sufficient for all religious wants of man. He extolled the precepts of Jesus, but denied the necessity of an atonement, and questioned the divinity of our Saviour; declaring that his Miracles were less stupendous than those of the Hindoo sage, who drank up the ocean, and then discharged it from his body. His opinions regarding the vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer differed little from those of the Unitarian school. Rammohun Roy was the foremost man of the age in Hindoo society and any treatise from his pen could not fail to exert a powerful influence among his fellow countrymen, more especially when it chimed in with their prejudices against Christianity. Dr. Marshman considered it important to stand forth in defence of the vital doctrines of the Gospel, thus impugned in the presence of the Hindoo community, on whom the light of Christian truth was then beginning to dawn. In the first number of the Quarterly ‘Friend of India’ he published a review of Rammohun Roy’s pamphlet, in which his arguments were closely sifted, and the doctrine of the Atonement fully vindicated. Rammohun Roy then published two consecutive appeals to the public in defence of the “Precepts”, which Dr. Marshman reviewed more elaborately in subsequent numbers. To recapitulate the

various arguments employed by him in these articles would demand more space than can be spared: it must therefore suffice to remark that they furnish a good exemplification of his peculiar style of reasoning which had been the study of his life. In one of his letters during the controversy, he says, 'these are the only articles on divinity I have ever written, and some may be apt to think me, from the 'Friend of India' more of a politician than a divine; yet the study of divinity is my highest delight.' The novelty of a discussion between a Christian divine and a learned Hindoo on the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, attracted much notice in a community which had hitherto treated evangelical truth with sceptical indifference. This defence of Christian truth was received with delight by its friends in India, and even the Unitarians in India and America commended the exemplary temper which Dr. Marshman had exhibited in the discussion. The only instance of asperity charged on him was the use on one occasion of the word Socinian, which the party repudiates; though in general society in Calcutta, Rammohun's school was designated as that of 'Socinianised Hindoos who retained their caste.' "

The passage indicates the spirit in which the controversy was carried on. The Missionaries connected with the Baptist Mission at Serampore failed to appreciate the broad standpoint of Rammohun who was anxious to evolve a unity amidst diversity. The Rev. Dr. K. S. Macdonald of the Free Church of Scotland in a pamphlet published in 1876 said:

"This work met with a very severe, and, I think on the whole, an unjust criticism from a quarter whence it might be least expected. The Rev Dr. Marshman attacked it in the *Friend of India*. This led to its defence by Rammohun in three different pamphlets, which are now generally bound together with the "Precepts of

Jesus' under the name 'The first, second and final appeal to the Christian public in reply to the observations of Dr. Marshman of Serampore.' Rammohun Roy had been on the best of terms with the missionaries before this and had been helpful to them in connection with their translations."

Rammohun interpreted Christianity as a true disciple of Jesus, but the Missionaries considered him an injurer of their cause. He all along pleaded that peace upon earth could be established if emphasis upon dogmas could be avoided and more attention could be given to moral duties. Unfortunately he spoke much in advance of his times. The sense of universal brotherhood did not dawn upon the advocates of the sectarian divines.

### **Relations with Christian friends.**

Since his arrival at Calcutta Rammohun made the acquaintance of many Christian gentlemen, and he wrote in a letter to Mr. Digby that when he was persecuted by his own countrymen he received very kind treatment at the hands of his European friends. He carried on the crusade against the custom of *Sati* in co-operation with them and received from them encouragement in pressing for the removal of various social evils. The European Missionaries residing at Serampore used to visit him at Calcutta and he also used to see them at Serampore. His name is mentioned in the *Periodical Account* of 1816, containing the annual report of the activities of the Baptist Missionary Society, and it is stated there that he had already paid the missionaries a visit. One of the missionaries, Mr. Yates writes in a letter dated August, 1816, that he was introduced to him a year ago, and that he was not acquainted with any one before this who cared for his soul. Later on he introduced Eustace Carey to him and once Rammohun had the privilege of



joining in family prayer with Carey. The quiet prayer in a Christian household made a good impression upon him. Eustace Carey presented to him a copy of Dr. Watt's Hymns which Rammohun valued very much and carried it with him as a precious thing. We are told by Yates that he offered a piece of land to Carey for a school.

In the Memoir of William Yates written by James Hoby in 1847 we find detailed information about the relations between Yates and Rammohun. Yates became acquainted with him shortly after his arrival in India, and he mentions of the first interview as early as October 25, 1815. Mr. Yates was then a young man, writes Hoby, and he was full of hope that a heathen gentleman, so distinguished for wealth and learning, might one day become a signal trophy of redeeming love, be blessed with the wisdom that cometh from above, and possessed of durable riches and righteousness. Mr. Yates writes about his first impressions:

"I visited a learned Brahman, he understands something of Latin, Greek, and the mathematics; he also speaks English fluently. I conversed with him more than two hours on subjects relating to religion. I endeavoured to refute his ideas relative to the eternity of matter, and his objections against the Bible. He expressed himself as very thankful for my visit, and wished to know where I lived, and promised to come and see me. He is a rich man, and says it is his intention to go to England, and study at one of the Universities. He despises the present system of the Hindoo religion. He has studied the Koran, and says that it is no better. He is bewildered, and questions whether any religion can be right, though he acknowledges, as far as he knows, that the Christian religion is superior to any other. I pray that Lord may open his eyes to understand, and his heart to receive the words of life."

Some months afterwards Mr. Yates wrote again:

"Rammchun Roy, the rich and learned native, has engaged to come and see me at Serampore. I think his enquiries are blessed to gradual enlightening of his mind. I generally call upon him when I go to Calcutta; he is kind and friendly, and exceedingly glad to converse on religious subjects."

The Memoirist was sadly disappointed at the turn of affairs later on. He continues:

"Alas, that so many years of subsequent advantages and study should have had no better result. Though so far enlightened, it is to be feared that he never saw the evil of sin, nor felt his need of a Saviour. He professed to admire the precepts of Jesus; but the blood of his cross he undervalued. He certainly exposed, with no ordinary power, the errors and follies of idolatry, maintaining, moreover, that during the former century, great changes in the system had been gradually introduced. He not only studied the Holy Scriptures diligently; but, in 1820, afforded Mr. Yates effectual assistance in the translation of the Gospels into Bengalee. By his aid, considerable improvements were made. 'He is one of the learned men in Sanskrit and Arabic in Calcutta; and to the idioms in Bengalee, as that in his native tongue, he assists us much': but, Mr. Yates adds, 'although he professes to be Christian, I am sorry to say, he is Arian in his sentiments.' This became more and more apparent, as the Baboo embodied, in certain publications, his new religious opinions. The one entitled 'The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness' was published anonymously; but having been ascribed to him by a reviewer, who at the same time designated him 'an enlightened heathen,' a controversy ensued, and Rammohun Roy issued in succession two Appeals in defence of his book, 'Precepts of Jesus.' Mr. Yates was led to take part in this controversy, . . ."

Besides the publication of the Precepts of Jesus another incident happened which alienated the Christian Missionaries from Rammohun Roy. The translation of the Bible into Bengalee rendered by Carey was found to contain many mistakes. The assistance of Rammohun was sought to get up a correct rendering. For this work William Adam and William Yates, both well known for their oriental scholarship, were associated with him. In the course of their work differences arose regarding the meaning of certain passages. They started their translation early in 1821, and when they came to the Gospel of John they stumbled over the interpretation of the Greek preposition *dia*; at first they agreed to render the passage as "All things were made *through* him," substituting *through* for *by*. Mr. Yates then discovered that this change was likely to undermine the doctrine of Trinity, and when he failed to persuade his colleagues to accept his views he left the committee. Rammohun and Adam still continued their work. Adam was gradually converted to the view that Trinitarianism could not be maintained. He writes in a letter dated May 7, 1821:

"It is now several months since I began to entertain some doubts respecting the Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ, suggested by frequent discussions with Rammohun Roy, whom I was endeavouring to bring over to the belief of that doctrine, and in which I was joined by Mr. Yates, who also professed to experience difficulties on the subject. Since then I have been diligently engaged in studying afresh the Scriptures with a view to this subject, humbly seeking divine guidance and illumination, and I do not hesitate to confess that I am unable to remove the weighty objections which present themselves against this doctrine. I do not mean to say that there are no difficulties in rejecting it, but the objections against it compared with the arguments for it, appear to me like a mountain compared with a molehill."

The change of opinion regarding the fundamental doctrines of the Trinitarian Church obliged Adam to leave the Baptist Mission. Mr. Yates wrote a number of essays in defence of his own position. This is mentioned in the *Periodical Account* of 1823:

“Various useful works have issued from the Mission Press in the course of the past year. Among them is a volume of excellent Essays on the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, by Mr. Yates, in answer to Rammohun Roy whose publication had previously received a very able reply from the pen of Dr. Marshman.”

But the loss of William Adam to the Mission was felt bitterly by them. They not only lost a good worker but their position was greatly undermined by the secession. The following passage has been extracted from the *Periodical Account* of 1822, indicating the feelings of the Society:

“Adequately to supply all these various scenes of labour, in addition to the other missionary objects which claim their attention, and would have been beyond the power of the brethren united at Calcutta, had their little band remained unbroken, and the health and strength of each individual entire. But in both these respects they have been exercised with painful trials. We mention with deep regret that Mr William Adam, lately one of their number, has embraced opinions derogatory to the honour of the Saviour—denying the proper divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in consequence of which the connexion between him and the Society has dissolved.”

Another incident indicates the attitude of Rammohun towards Christianity. He was not only approached by the Baptist Missionaries but also by the Anglican priests. A Lord Bishop was appointed in 1814 to organise the activities of the Church of England, and the first incumbent of the position was Bishop Middleton who

made early acquaintance with him and tried to convert him to Christianity; "but not content with the usual arguments drawn from the truth, and excellence of our religion, he presented the inducement, at least as Rammohun Roy understood him, of the honour and repute, the influence and usefulness he would acquire by becoming the apostle of India, the first great promulgator of the Christian doctrine to his countrymen" as narrated by William Adam in a lecture in America. Rammohun Roy went to see Bishop Middleton on invitation in the hot season of 1820 or 21. In the course of the conversation the Lord Bishop made the offer at which Rammohun became indignant and rejected the offer with scorn. On the way he saw Adam and expressed his feelings to him. In relating the incident Adam said: "I think it quite probable that the bishop may have merely the pious but inconsiderate wish that Rammohun Roy might become the apostle and promulgator of Christian truth in India, without meaning to offer a worldly motive which just so far as influenced his mind, would have rendered the desired conversion worthless. But Rammohun did not so understand it; and in relating the circumstance to me, spoke in language and with feelings of bitter indignation that he should have been deemed capable of being, influenced by such a consideration or by any consideration but the love of truth and goodness. I do not recollect that he informed me what answer he made to the bishop, but he stated that he had never afterwards visited him. He felt as if the pure and unsullied integrity of his mind, his personal honour, and independence had been assailed by the presentation to him of a low, and unworthy motive and he resented accordingly."

Rammohun rejected all overtures to become a Christian and he directed his energies to expose the fallacies of the Trinitarian Christianity and to condemn the methods employed by the Missionaries to obtain converts. He loved freedom in thought and was opposed

to any policy which was likely to curb this freedom in man. The love of freedom was the most predominant feature of his character." This tenacity of personal independence," says William Adam, "this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him in religion and politics, and still more remarkably even of those whom the laws of nature and of society subjected to his undisputed control."

### The Brahmunical Magazine

The high ideals that Rammohun set up for himself for discussion of religious subjects were unfortunately not much in evidence among the people with whom he had to deal. We have already seen how he carried on the controversy with the Hindu Pandits. He tried to meet the adversary on his own ground and argued with him from the standpoint of the authority accepted by the latter. With the Hindus he argued as a Hindu and with the Christians he argued as a Christian. He followed this method in the controversy with the Serampore Missionaries regarding the Precepts of Jesus. But the Missionaries very often used to vilify the religion of the Hindus for the purpose of propaganda. They did not know anything but the Bible and could not enter into the spirit of any other Scripture or Faith but their own. The columns of the *Samachar Durpan* were filled with bitter invectives against the faith of the Hindus and their social and religious institutions. Rammohun could not bear this insult to his countrymen. He sent a reply to an article appearing in the *Durpan* of the 14th July, 1821, in which the pantheistic doctrine of the *Vedanta Sastra* was attacked, but it was not published. This led Rammohun to publish the reply in a new

magazine called the *Brahmunical Magazine*. It was published in the name of his Pandit, Shivaprosad Sarma and the articles were written both in English and Bengalee. Unfortunately all the copies of this important publication are not available. Only four issues of the English section and three of the Bengalee have been recovered and printed in his works. All these writings bore the name of Shivaprosad Sarma but they were the composition of Rammohun as he did not like to publish his writings always in his own name.

The object of publishing these essays is described in full in the Preface to the first edition. There Rammohun shows his deep love for India and the Indian literature. His cosmopolitanism did not mean that he should cast aside the rich inheritance from the great Hindu teachers. In the present circumstances of India he felt that the method adopted by the Christian missionaries to spread their religion was most inconsiderate and insulting to the Indians. Some passages from the Preface may be quoted here to illustrate this statement:

“For a period of upwards of fifty years, this country (Bengal) has been in exclusive possession of the English nation; for the first thirty years of which, from their word and deed, it was universally believed that they would not interfere with the religion of their subjects, and that they truly wished every man to act in such matters according to the dictates of his own conscience. Their possessions in Hindoostan and their political strength have, through the grace of God, gradually increased. But during the last twenty years, a body of English gentlemen, who are called missionaries, have been publicly endeavouring, in several ways to convert Hindoos and Mussulmans of this country into Christianity. The first way is that of publishing and distributing among the natives various books, large and small, reviling both religions, and abusing and ridiculing the gods and saints of the former. the second way is that of standing in front of the natives

or in the public roads to preach the excellency of their own religion and the debasedness of that of others: the third way is that if any natives of low origin become Christian from the desire of gain or from any other motives, these gentlemen employ and maintain them as a necessary encouragement to others to follow their example."

If the missionaries had preached their religion in countries not under the rule of their countrymen they would have been esteemed as truly inspired by the spirit of Christ; but "In Bengal, where the English are the sole rulers, and where the mere name of Englishman is sufficient to frighten people, an encroachment upon the rights of her poor timid and humble inhabitants and upon their religion, cannot be viewed in the eyes of God or the poor timid and humble inhabitants and upon their public as a justifiable act. For wise and good men always feel disinclined to hurt those that are of much less strength than themselves, and if such weak creatures be dependent upon them and subject to their authority, they can never attempt, even in thought to mortify their feelings."

The heart of Rammohun was agonised at the humiliation of his own people and in bitter anguish he wrote:

"We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries, and the cause of such degradation has been our excess in civilization and abstinence from slaughter even of animals; as well as our division into castes, which has been the source of want of unity among us."

He further maintained that the conquerors ridiculed the religion of the conquered, e.g., the Mussalmans laughed at the Hindu religion or the Romans the Jewish religion. The English were no exception to the rule. As a consummate rhetorician Rammohun pleaded:



“But as the English are celebrated for the manifestation of humanity and for administering justice, and as a great many gentlemen among them are noticed to have had an aversion to violate equity, it would tend to destroy their acknowledged character if they follow the example of the former savage conquerors in disturbing the established religion of the country; because to introduce a religion by means of abuse and insult, or by affording the hope of worldly gain, is inconsistent with reason and justice. If by the force of argument they can prove the truth of their religion and the falsity of that of Hindoos, many would of course embrace their doctrines, and in case they fail to prove this, they should not undertake such useless trouble, nor tease Hindoos any longer by their attempts at conversion. In consideration of the small huts in which Brahmans of learning generally reside, and the simple food, such as vegetables, etc., which they are accustomed to eat, and the poverty which obliges them to live upon charity, the missionary gentlemen may not, I hope, abstain from controversy from contempt of them, for truth and true religion do not always belong to wealth and power, high names or lofty places.”

This was the noble defence of a worthy cause by a true patriot. He did not yield in his admiration for the teachings of Jesus, neither did he use disrespectful language towards his opponents, but at the same time he stood up for the rights of the poor Hindoos who had fallen low in the estimation of the foreigners. In the Preface to the Second Edition he further wrote that it was well-known to the whole world that no people on earth were more tolerant than the Hindus, as they believed all men to be equally within the reach of Divine beneficence, and they wished good of every religious sect and denomination. His object in publishing this magazine was not to oppose Christianity but he said:

“I was influenced by the conviction that persons who

travel to a distant country for the purpose of overturning the opinions of its inhabitants and introducing their own, ought to be prepared to demonstrate that the latter are more reasonable than the former."

The letter in the *Samachar Darpan* of 14th July, 1821, asked some questions regarding the doctrines of the Vedanta, Nyaya, Mimansa and Sankhya Sastra. In the Vedanta it is said God is one and eternal, and the soul is not different from him. The visible world is created by Maya, and this is opposed to a true knowledge of God. The existence of the world and consciousness is therefore due to the ignorance of the nature of God. If the truth of these doctrines is admitted then God is not what he is represented to be or both God and Maya are supreme in the universe. Secondly, if soul be the same as God, then the idea of reward or punishment for good or evil deeds cannot arise. Moreover these doctrines deny perfection to God. Thirdly, if God is influenced by Maya in the creation of the world how can the doctrine of his perfection be maintained. Nyaya Sastra, on the other hand, maintains that God is one and the souls are various and they both are imperishable. Besides, space, position, time and atoms are eternal. Does not this doctrine destroy the unity of God? In the Mimansa Sastra again the consequences of the sacrificial rites are God. How can we call God the consequences of the rites produced by men? The Sankhya Sastra admits that nature and the God of nature are operating jointly, but the latter is invisible. Does not this suggest the duality of God?

In reply to these charges Rammohun wrote that he did not see any reproach upon God by the admission of the doctrine of Maya: "Maya is the creating power of the eternal God, and consequently it is declared by the Vedanta to be eternal." The attributes of the eternal God are necessarily eternal and if this be an impropriety it applies to all religious systems. The

Vedanta has nowhere said that God and the Maya are equally supreme, and substance is always superior to the quality. The Vedanta has never maintained the absurd doctrine of equality. With regard to the doctrine of the relations between soul and God, and reward and punishment, he said, "The world, as the Vedanta says, is the effect of Maya, and is material; but God is mere spirit, whose particular influences being shed upon certain material objects are called souls in the same manner as the reflections of the sun are seen on water placed in various vessels. As these reflections of the sun seem to be moved by the motion of the water of those vessels without effecting any motion in the sun, so souls, being as it were, the reflections of the Supreme Spirit on matter, seem to be affected by the circumstances that influence matter, without God being affected by such circumstances." By the relation of the Supreme Spirit with various material objects numerous souls appear and seem as performing good and evil works, and also receiving their consequences. But as soon as this relation ceases the souls cease to exist separately from the original: "Hence God is one, and the soul, although it is not in fact of a different origin from God, is yet liable to experience the consequences of good and evil works; but this liability of the soul to reward or punishment cannot render God liable to either." The doctrine of the perfection of God and his sufficiency cannot be assailed on such superficial grounds. God is not subordinate to Maya which is his attribute. God is true and omnipresent, and existence belongs to him alone. So also it is in the Christian books God is all in all. Vedanta thus does not lay down any absurd doctrine.

The Nyaya Sastra declares that God is one and souls are various, and both are imperishable; that space, position and time, as well as atoms are eternal; but this does not mean that God cannot be supposed to be the true cause of the world, as he creates like men with the

aid of materials, such as matter etc. The reply of Rammohun is: "Every professor of any theistical system, such as the followers of the Nyaya doctrines, and those of Christianity believe that God is not perishable, and that the soul has no end. The soul, during an endless period, either enjoys the beatitude procured by an acquisition of knowledge of God, or receive the consequences of works. In like manner, they both believe that it is God that bestows on the soul the consequences of its good and evil actions; and that the will of God is immutable. If any fault be found with these doctrines, then the system of Nyaya and of Christianity both must be equally subject to it; for both systems maintain these doctrines."

Rammohun here shows his genius as a synthetic philosopher in not only proving the consistency of the different Hindu systems but also their consistency with Christian system of thought. The souls work as subordinate agents of God the supreme authority. He proves with great reasonableness, "No partial resemblance can establish the equality of any being with God; for Christians and Hindus ascribe to God and to the soul, will and mercy; but neither of them suppose that therefore both are Gods, but that one is superior and the other inferior."

With regard to the doctrines of Mimansa he says the two objections raised against it are self-contradictory: God is said to be both the consequences of rites, and the rites themselves. In fact there are two schools of thought in Mimansa: one school believing only in the performance of rites is reckoned among atheists; the second school professes the existence of God, but it says God is neutral to the reward or punishment which we experience as the consequence of our works. The school however maintains "that to say that God, by inducing some men to pray to him or to act virtuously, reward them, and at the same time neglects others and then

punishes them for not having made their supplications to him (though both are equally his children), amounts to an imputation against God of unjust partiality. Hence it is evident, that according to the doctrines of this sect. the unity of God is well maintained."

The objections raised against the Sankhya are similarly without any proper basis. Nature is declared by the Sankhya to be subordinate to, and dependent upon the perceiving Spirit, and consequently the Spirit is the Supreme God. Rammohun thus traced through all systems the unity of God as the Supreme Spirit, the one did not contradict another, but they all proved the same truth through various experiences.

In the Second Number of the Magazine the charges brought against the Puranas and Tantras were examined. Fault was found with them that they established the duty of worshipping God as possessing various forms, names and localities, that they insisted upon having a spiritual teacher in whom implicit confidence had to be reposed, the gods described in those Sastras were like other human beings, and a being having name and form could not be omnipresent. In reply to this Rammohun said: "The Puranas, etc., agreeable to the Vedanta represent God in every way as incomprehensible and without form. There is, moreover, this in the Puranas, that lest persons of feeble intellect unable to comprehend God as not subject to the senses and without form, should either pass their life without any religious duties whatever or should engage in evil work—to prevent this they have represented God in the form of a man and other animals and as possessed of all those desires with which we are conversant whereby they may have some regard to the Divine Being. Afterwards by diligent endeavours they become qualified for the true knowledge of God; but over and over again the Puranas have carefully affirmed, that they have given this account of the forms of God

with a view to the benefit of persons of weak minds, and that in truth, God is without name, form, organs, and sensual enjoyment." People some times forget certain fundamental rules regarding the study of the Hindu Scriptures and thereby they make mistakes. In this respect Christian missionaries are not free from guilt. They ignore the rules that those Puranas and Tantras which have commentaries, and which have been quoted by the acknowledged expounders are to be received for evidence. Another method of reading the Scriptures is to follow the rule that "All Smritis which are contrary to the Veda, and all atheistical works, are not conducive to future happiness: they dwell in darkness." But the missionaries take up the books which never have been regarded as authority and therefore represent the Hindu religion as very base. It must be said to the credit of the Hindu Scriptures that they never say that the names and forms are real. The Christian missionaries on the other hand consider such things in the Bible as real. In order to prove his point he put a few problems to test whether some of the doctrines held by the missionaries were agreeable to reason.

In the third number of the Magazine the reply given by the missionaries to the questions asked in the second number was examined. He had no difficulty in showing the fallacies committed by the Christian divines. The fourth number was published after two years, on November 15, 1823. The missionaries had lost their sense of propriety. In the *Periodical Account* of 1822 appears the following passage:

"The effects of this method of propagating divine knowledge, have at length become so apparent as to induce some respectable natives to unite in adopting the same expedient, on behalf of the Brāhmuncial system. These persons have established a periodical work, entitled, the Brahmunical Magazine, or the Missionary and the Brahmun; discovering indeed much ignorance of the Gospel, and abounding in misrepresentations of

the motives of those whom they attack: but the appearance of which is hailed by our brethren, as it will probably help to cherish that spirit of enquiry and investigation, which has been hitherto so foreign to the Hindoo character."

The missionaries could not bear the exposure of their methods by learned Hindus, and in a small tract brought direct charges of *atheism* against the doctrines of the Vedas, and made undeserved reflections on the followers of the Vedic doctrines. Rammohun took up the challenge in the fourth number and concluded the tract by saying:

"I shall now, in a few words, for the information of the Missionary Gentlemen, lay down our religious creed. In conformity with the precepts of our ancient religion, contained in the Holy Vedanta, though disregarded by the generality of moderns, we look up to One Being as the animating and regulating principle of the whole collective body of the universe, and as the origin of all individual souls which in a manner somewhat similar, vivify and govern their particular bodies; and we reject idolatry in every form and under whatsoever veil of sophistry it may be practised, either in adoration of an artificial, a natural or an imaginary object. The divine homage which we offer, consists solely in the practice of *Daya* or benevolence towards each other, and not in fanciful faith or in certain motions of the feet, legs, arms, head, tongue or other bodily organs, in pulpit or before a temple. Among other objects, in our solemn devotion, we frequently offer our humble thanks to God, for the blessings of British Rule in India and sincerely pray, that it may continue its beneficent operation for centuries to come."

The creed of Rammohun is told here in plain language. The controversy created so much bitterness in the hearts of the missionaries that they forgot them-

selves and used abusive language towards the Hindus such as "Father of lies alone to whom it evidently owes its origin" "Impure fables of his false gods," etc. Rammohun Roy retorted in a dignified manner: "We must recollect that we have engaged in solemn religious controversy and not in retorting abuse against each other."

Another interesting controversy was carried on in the name of Ram Doss and Dr. R. Tytler in the columns of the *Bengal Hurkaru* in May, 1823. Dr. Tytler sent a challenge to Rammohun Roy after the publication of the *Final Appeal to the Christian Public*, but Rammohun would not publish it in his periodical unless it was supported by a Christian divine. He believed that controversy could be carried on only with the persons with authority and not with any body. The controversy was about the statement that "Belief in the Divinity of the Holy Saviour is on a par with Hindu's belief in his Thakoor." Dr. Tytler made futile attempts to refute the arguments of Rammohun. The contradictions in the Christian dogma and faith were also held up in "A dialogue between a missionary and three Chinese converts."

### The Unitarian Committee

The constructive genius of Rammohun was not satisfied with merely exposing the fallacies and contradictions in the practices of the Hindus and Christians. The secession of Mr. Adam from the Baptist Mission led to the formation of a Unitarian Committee in September, 1821. The members of the Committee were Theodore Dickens, a Barrister of the Supreme Court, George James Gordon, a merchant of the firm of Mackintosh & Co., William Tate, an Attorney, B. W. Macleod, a Surgeon in the Company's service, Norman Kerr, an uncovenanted servant of the Company, and among the



Indians were Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prusunna Coomar Tagore, Radhaprosad Roy (the eldest son of Rammohun Roy), and William Adam himself. These European and Indian gentlemen co-operated in spreading education and in dispelling the ignorance of the people on various matters. Evidently these men were not actuated by a unity of faith; they possibly formed this organization to provide work for Mr. Adam and as all of them agreed about the necessity of more knowledge they declared the object of the Committee as "Proselytism is not our immediate object. We aim to remove ignorance and superstition, and to furnish information respecting the evidences, the duties, and the doctrines of the religion of Christ " and they desired to carry out these objects by the "promotion of education, rational discussion, and the publication of books both in English and in the native languages. A house was rented for conducting service, a school was started, a printing press called the Unitarian Press was set up. Mr. Adam became the minister of the new organization, as a necessary corollary of his conversion to the new faith. The financial responsibility of all these activities devolved upon Rammohun. The members of the Committee were men of liberal views but all of them did not possess the spirit of making the mission a vigorous movement. At this time Rammohun entered into correspondence with the Unitarians of England and America, who found in him a kindred soul. The restoration of Christianity to its old purity became a passion with him and he tried to enlist the sympathies and co-operation of those engaged in the similar task in other parts of the world. He wrote in a letter to a gentleman of Baltimore, on October, 22, 1822:

"I have now every reason to hope, that the truths of Christianity will not be much longer kept hidden under the veil of heathen doctrines and practices, gradually introduced among the followers of Christ, since many lovers

of truth are zealously engaged in rendering the religion of Jesus clear from corruptions.

"I admire the zeal of the Missionaries sent to this country, but disapprove of the means they have adopted. In the performance of their duty, they always begin with such obscure doctrines as are calculated to excite ridicule instead of respect, towards the religion which they wish to promulgate. The accompanying pamphlets, called *The Brahmunical Magazine*, and published by a Brahmun, are a proof of my assertion. The last number of this publication has remained unanswered for twelve months.

"If a body of men attempt to upset a system of doctrines generally established in a country, and to introduce another system, they are in my humble opinion, in duty bound to prove the truth, or, at least, the superiority of their own.

"It is, however, a great satisfaction to my conscience to find, that the doctrines inculcated by Jesus and his apostles, are quite different from those human inventions which the Missionaries are persuaded to profess, and entirely consistent with reason and the revelation delivered by Moses and the prophets. I am, therefore, anxious to support them, even at the risk of my own life. I rely much on the force of truth, which will, I am sure, ultimately prevail. Our number is comparatively small, but I am glad to inform you, that none of them can justly be charged with the want of zeal and prudence.

"I wish to add, in order that you may set me right, if you find me mistaken,—my view of Christianity is, that in representing all mankind as the children of one eternal father, it enjoins them to love one another, without making any distinction of country, caste, colour, or creed; notwithstanding they may be justified in the sight of the Creator in manifesting their respect towards each other, according to the property of their actions, and

the reasonableness of their religious opinions and observance."

In this letter Rammohun Roy tells clearly in what light he looks upon the teachings of Jesus. He had firm faith in the universal doctrine of love, and his respect for Christianity was due to the fact that it taught this love in a predominant degree. But he was misunderstood by his own countrymen as well as by the Christian missionaries, and he found to his disappointment that men agreeing with his views were not many. He, however, did not lose faith in the truth of his own convictions, and wrote in another letter to the same gentleman of Baltimore:

"Although our adversaries are both numerous and zealous, as the adversaries of truth always have been, yet our prospects are by no means discouraging, if we only have the means of following up what has already been done.

"We confidently hope that, through our various means the period will be accelerated, when the belief in the Divine Unity, and in the mission of Christ, will universally prevail."

The Unitarian friends in England and America were impressed by his earnestness, and lent him support in carrying on the activities of the Unitarian Committee, the Anglo-Hindu School, the Unitarian Press and the Unitarian Congregation. Rammohun Roy maintained all these institutions out of his own funds. We are informed on the authority of James Silk Buckingham that he devoted one-third of his private fortune to acts of the purest philanthropy and benevolence. In spite of all his efforts the work of the Unitarian Committee did not prosper. Still they persisted. In a letter to Dr. T. Rees of London, Rammohun wrote on June 4, 1824:

"As to the state of the Unitarian Society in Calcutta, our Committee have not yet been able to purchase a suit-

able piece of ground for a chapel and school. They will, I hope, soon succeed in their endeavours. We have collected, partly by purchase, and partly by gift, a great number of works, and established a pretty respectable library in Calcutta, in which I have placed the books with which you have favoured me, in the same manner as all the books that the Rev. Mr. Adam, the Unitarian Missionary in Bengal, and myself have received at different times from England."

The activities of Rammohun were fairly reported in the places interested in Unitarianism. The Rev. Dr. Henry Ware, Professor of Divinity in the Harvard College, U.S.A., addressed a letter to him enquiring about the prospects of Christianity in India. Rammohun sent a reply to him on February 2, 1824, in which he referred to his time and attention being engrossed in constant controversies with polytheists both of the West and East. In reply to the query, "Whether it be desirable that the inhabitants of India should be converted to Christianity, in what degree desirable, and for what reasons?" Rammohun wrote: "As I am led to believe, from reason, what is set forth in scripture, that 'in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him,' in whatever form of worship he may have been taught to glorify God. Nevertheless, I presume to think, that Christianity, if properly inculcated, has a great tendency to improve the moral, and political state of mankind, than any other known religious system."

With regard to the position of Unitarian Christians Rammohun informed:

"The Rev. Mr. Adam is the only Unitarian Missionary in Bengal, and he publicly avowed Unitarianism so late as the latter end of 1821. Notwithstanding the many disadvantages under which he has been labouring, he has brought this system of Christianity into notice in this part of the globe; as previous to that period many

did not know that there was such a thing as Unitarianism, and others tried to stigmatise it, in proportion as their prejudices for the corruptions of Christianity prompted them to abuse reason and common sense, without fear of contradiction. Mr. Adam, although he has made no avowed native convert, has already received every countenance from several respectable European gentlemen, and from a great number of the reading part of the native community in Calcutta."

Rammohun did not see any chance of Unitarianism being accepted by the Indians until they had made more progress in learning and were able to estimate the respective merits of the different religions by comparing one system with another. He therefore suggested that the best way to make Unitarianism acceptable was to send as many serious and able teachers of European learning and science and Christian morality, unmingled with religious doctrines, as could be arranged. He favoured the starting of Unitarian Missionary Schools. It seems the cause of Unitarianism did not make any progress in Calcutta since then. Rammohun was involved in vexatious law-suits which prevented him from giving that attention to the religious works which they deserved. He wrote on February 7, 1827, to Mr. J. B. Estlin of Bristol: "For a period of more than two years, owing to the most affecting circumstances arising from the hostile feelings of some individuals towards my family, I found myself totally unable to pursue any undertaking or carry on correspondence, even with those whom I sincerely loved and revered, either residing in this country or in any other part of the globe."

He, however, expressed his joy at the progress made by the Unitarian Society through the efforts of friends from abroad. A sum of Rs. 15,000 had been remitted to Calcutta for religious works and Mr. Adam expected to resume his activities. Large sums of money were

also raised in Calcutta for the purpose. Among the contributors were Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore and Prusanna Coomar Tagore. Rammohun Roy could not join in the Unitarian worship or any other congregational worship for some time on account of his occupation with the vexatious lawsuits. By the beginning of 1827 the troubles were over, and he could give more attention to religious questions. By the end of 1826 a tract entitled "One hundred arguments for the Unitarian Faith" originally published by the American Unitarian Association was reprinted in the Calcutta Unitarian Press at the expense of Rammohun. Mr. Adam was also released from his duties as editor of the *Calcutta Chronicle*, when the paper was suppressed by the Government of Bengal. The Unitarian congregation used to meet in a room of the premises of the *Bengal Harkaru*. A proposal was mooted to have a permanent place for the Unitarian Society and its school. Rammohun's son, Radha Prasad offered a piece of land adjoining the Anglo-Hindu School and attempts were made to collect money for building a chapel and school. But the project does not seem to have made great progress. To stimulate interest in Unitarian worship Mr. Adam made the experiment of having the service conducted in English on Sunday mornings in August, 1827, and as this did not attract many people he started the service in the evening in November but this did not prove more attractive. The congregation gradually was reduced to nothing. A proposal to have a chapel for service in Bengalee did not receive much favour. Mr. Adam delivered a series of lectures in the Anglo-Hindu School, but these lectures on the fundamental principles of Unitarianism did not draw more than 12 to 25 persons. The indefatigable Adam then proposed that an association of the Unitarians in Calcutta be formed as an auxiliary to the Unitarian Associations of England and America. He suspected that the name Christian associated with Unitarianism was the thing the

Hindu Unitarians objected to. His attempt to organise the Hindu Unitarians as a distinct body working in co-operation with the Christian Unitarians did not receive any encouraging response. Frustrated in every way Mr. Adam proposed to the Unitarian Committee that he might be sent to Madras for some time for mission work. But Rammohun was not agreeable to this idea of sending Mr. Adam away from Calcutta. There was no work for Mr. Adam, the Committee could not provide any suitable work for him, and he had therefore to retire from his position broken-hearted.

It is difficult to guess why Rammohun became so indifferent towards Mr. Adam and his mission. There is no evidence to prove that he began to dislike Unitarianism. But it seems the organisation under the appellation of Unitarian Committee did not satisfy his ideals. He had then conceived of something of more comprehensive, and more universal and cosmopolitan than mere Unitarianism. In a tract entitled "Answer of a Hindoo to the question 'Why you frequent a Unitarian Place of Worship instead of the numerously attended Established Churches?'" Rammohun gave ten points for his preference for Unitarian worship. The tract bore the name of Chandra Sekhar Dev, but in fact it was written by Rammohun as Chandra Sekhar himself had admitted later on. This attitude underwent a change and Rammohun's synthetic mind became anxious to give a shape to his cosmopolitan sympathies in a permanent form, and the result was the foundation of the Brahma Samaj, of which we shall talk in a subsequent chapter.

Rammohun identified himself with Christianity so far as it helped him in his spiritual and moral endeavours, but his sympathies were not limited by Christian boundaries. He loved Jesus, but he was not satisfied with orthodox Christian doctrines. He desired for India a social uplift on the lines of Christian social life, but he

came to realise that it would be a sad thing for India if she had to break away from her ancient culture. With all his admiration for Christianity he was a Hindu to the core and felt that there was a greater chance of his universalism to grow in India on the background of the old Hindu culture than with the help of a Christian exotic presented in the European garb.



## CHAPTER VI

### NEW EDUCATION

#### Foundation of the Hindu College.

Rammohun had his education in the Oriental fashion in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. He acquired knowledge in English by his own efforts at a mature age, and he learnt Hebrew and Greek when engaged in the study of the Bible. He felt that the old system of education prevalent in the country required modification. In carrying on the propaganda against the prejudices of the people it became evident that no progress was possible in any department of life unless the minds of the people were illuminated by the light of Science. Soon after he had come to Calcutta and started the discussions in the *Atmiya Sabha* he made the acquaintance of David Hare who came uninvited to attend a meeting of the Sabha. In conversation with him Rammohun felt convinced that English education would prove very useful in widening their outlook. They both agreed about the necessity of starting an English school. For this purpose co-operation of the public and the Government was necessary. Rammohun enlisted the sympathy of many influential men of Calcutta and approached Sir Edward Hyde East, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who was known to possess liberal ideas about these things, to give a definite shape to these plans. Sir Edward called a meeting of the leading men at his house and a Committee was formed to organise a new institution on the lines approved of by them. But a curious thing happened at the meeting. One of the gentlemen present objected to any subscription being taken from Rammohun Roy so that

he might not be on the Committee. Sir Edward felt amused at this attitude of a Hindu who would not oppose association with Christians but could not co-operate with a countryman of his. Rammohun did not desire to thrust



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himself upon the Committee if thereby he could help the cause of education. The story had been recently unearthed by the researches of Mr. Brajendranath Banerji. In a paper contributed to the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, he has quoted in full a letter written by Sir Edward Hyde East to Mr. J. Harington, another Judge of the Supreme Court, then on leave in England. We give extracts from that letter with a view

to clearly establish the part played by Rammohun in the introduction of the English education in India. The letter says:

"An interesting and curious scene has lately been exhibited here, which shows that all things pass under change in due season. About the beginning of May, a Brahmin of Calcutta (Rammohun Roy), whom I knew, and who is well known for his intelligence and active interference among the principal native inhabitants, and also intimate with many of our gentlemen of distinction, called upon me and informed me, that many of the leading Hindus were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of their children in a liberal manner as practised by Europeans of condition; and desired that I would lend them my aid towards it, by having a meeting held under my sanction..... The meeting was accordingly held at my house on the 14th of May, 1816, at which 50 and upwards of the most respectable Hindu inhabitants of rank or wealth attended, including also the principal Pandits; when a sum of nearly half a lac of rupees was subscribed, and many more subscriptions were promised.....

"Talking afterwards with several of the company, before I proceeded to open the business of the day, I found that one of them in particular, a Brahmin of good caste, and a man of wealth and influence, was mostly set against Rammohun Roy.....(who has lately written against the Hindu idolatry, and upbraids his countrymen pretty sharply). He expressed a hope that no subscription would be received from Rammohun Roy. I asked, why not? 'Because he has chosen to separate himself from us, and to attack our religion.' 'I do not know' I observed, 'what Rammohun's religion is'—(I have heard it is a kind of Unitarianism)—'not being acquainted or having had any communication with him; but I hope that my being a Christian, and a sincere one, to the best of my ability, will be no reason for your refusing my subscrip-

tion to your undertaking. 'This I said in a tone of gaiety; and he answered readily in the same style, 'No, not at all; we shall be glad of your money; but it is a different thing with Rammohun Roy, who is a Hindu, and yet has publicly reviled us, and written against us and our religion'. .''

The letter of Sir Edward proves clearly that Rammohun was the originator of the scheme but the orthodox members of the Hindu community could not tolerate him for his strong views regarding the superstitions and practices of the Hindus. Sir Edward further explains this point:

"Upon another occasion I had asked a very sensible Brahmin what it was that made some of his people so violent against Rammohun. He said, in truth, they did not like a man of his consequence to take open part against them; that he himself had advised Rammohun against it; he had told him that, if he found anything wrong among his countrymen, he should have endeavoured by private advice and persuasion to amend it; but that the course he had taken had set everybody against him, and would do no good in the end. They particularly disliked (and this I believe is at the bottom of the resentment) his associating himself so much as he does with Mussulmans, not with this or that Mussulman as a personal friend, but being continually surrounded by them, and suspected to partake meals with them .... They would rather be reformed by anybody else than by him."

For this great affront to him Rammohun never gave up the cause of education. He devoted his money in spreading education in various ways. The College which owed its existence to the inspiration of Rammohun came into existence as the *Vidyalay*, *Maha Pathshala* or *Anglo-Indian College*. Until 1823 it was managed by a committee consisting of Indians and Europeans. Gradually the Europeans left the committee and the College suffer-

ed from mismanagement. The help of the General Committee of Public Instruction was sought, and it was proposed to institute a joint committee consisting of an equal number of Indian Managers and of the General Committee. This the General Committee declined, and accepted the position of Visitors. This college was later on taken up by the Government and in 1855 it was merged in the Presidency College.

### **Anglo-Hindu School.**

Rammohun established an English School at Suripara in about 1816-17. Here the boys received education free and the entire cost was borne by Rammohun himself. We are told that about 200 boys used to attend this school, and this was the first English school in Calcutta run entirely by the Indians. The private initiative is a great force in the field of education and Rammohun led the way in introducing a new system. Later on he started a class of the advanced students in his garden-house in Upper Circular Road, and an Englishman, named Mr. Morecroft was appointed teacher at Rs. 100 a month. A plot of land was purchased at Simla near Cornwallis Square and a building set up, in which was accommodated the Anglo-Hindu School in 1822. This school continued its useful work under the direction of the Unitarian Committee, and William Adam became one of the Visitors. But the financial responsibility rested entirely with Rammohun. The school drew a large number of students of respectable families. Rammohun's own son, Ramaprosad, received his education here along with Debendranath Tagore, son of Dwarkanath Tagore, and who later on became a leader of the Brahma Samaj, and was held in veneration by all classes of people as a Mahārshi. Sandford Arnot was a teacher of the school. Mr. Adam desired that the school should be placed in charge of a regularly constituted

public committee, but Rammohun did not feel encouraged to take this step, possibly on account of the treatment he received at the time of organising the Vidyalay or the Hindu College. The school made satisfactory progress in all departments. An account of the public examination held in the rooms attached to the office of the *Bengal Harkaru* was published in the same journal of the 10th January, 1828. We are thankful to Mr. Brajendranath Banerji for digging up from the old files of the Journal the following account:

“A public examination of Rammohun Roy’s Anglo-Hindoo School took place, January 7, at the *Hurkaru* public rooms, when we had a proof of the strong interest felt in native improvement, afforded by the presence and continued attention to the proceedings of the several of the principal merchants and gentlemen of Calcutta, besides natives. The number of boys appeared to be about fifty, but the number whose names are in the school register is between seventy and eighty. This institution is principally supported at the expense of Rammohun Roy, with the aid of a few philanthropic individuals, both among his own countrymen and Europeans, who are friendly to the communication of liberal education to the natives of this country; and it must have afforded a very high degree of pleasure to that distinguished individual, as well as to those who have aided him in his benevolent exertions, to observe the progress which several of the pupils have made in their studies. To the intelligent observer it must have been an additional source of gratification to notice among the scholars several of the children of the native gentlemen who contribute to the support of the school, in no respect distinguished from those who receive their education gratuitously.

“Besides three classes that were examined in reading, spelling, grammar, and translation, the first, or most advanced class, was also examined in Joyce’s Scientific

Dialogues on Mechanics and Astronomy, in the first sixteen propositions of the first book of Euclid, and in translating into Bengalee a passage of Voltaire's History of Charles XII of Sweden, in all of which they acquitted themselves apparently very much to the satisfaction of the auditors. Although this class appears to have made very little progress in mathematics, yet they are perfect masters of all they professed to know: and one boy in particular, Bissonauth Mitter, was distinguished for the great facility with which he demonstrated the propositions assigned to him, and the clear apprehension he had formed of their import, and of the corollaries deducible from them."

From this report it appears how Rammohun tried to introduce modern learning in his own school and to treat all children of the school as equals.

### **Demand for Modern Learning.**

The advent of the British in India has made the old system of education almost obsolete. For some time the British administrators gave their support to the old system. Warren Hastings established at his own cost the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781, the special object of which was "to qualify the sons of Muhammadan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the State, even at that date largely monopolised by the Hindus." After two years the management was taken over by the Government and Hastings was paid the money he had spent on his own account. At the instance of Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at Benares a Sanskrit College was established there in 1792. Duncan wrote in his letter to the Earl of Cornwallis, on January 1, 1792:

"Two important advantages seemed derivable from such an establishment, the first to the British name and nation in its tendency towards endearing our Government to the native Hindoos; by our exceeding in our attention

towards them and their systems, the care shown even by their own native princes; for although learning has ever been cultivated at Benares, in numerous private seminaries, yet no public Institution of the kind here proposed ever appears to have existed; to which may, in a considerable degree, be attributed the great difficulty of now collecting complete treatises (although such are well known to have existed) on the Hindoo religion, laws, arts, or sciences; a defect and loss, which the permanency of a college at Benares must be peculiarly well adapted to correct, and recover by gradual collection and correction of the books still to be met (though in a very dispersed and imperfect state) so as with care and attention and by the assistance and exertions of the possessors and students to accumulate at only a small and comparative expense to Government, a precious library of the most ancient and valuable general learning and tradition now perhaps existing on any part of the globe.

"The 2nd principal advantage that may be derived from this Institution will be felt in its effects more immediately by the natives, though not without being participated in by the British subjects, who are to rule over them, by preserving and disseminating a knowledge of the Hindoo Law and proving a nursery of future doctors and expounders thereof, to assist the European judges in the due, regular, and uniform administration of its genuine letter and spirit to the body of the people." Besides starting these two institutions for Oriental learning, mainly for their own advantage, the Government did nothing to promote useful knowledge among the Indians. At the time of the renewal of the Charter in 1792-93 an attempt was made by some Christian philanthropists to compel the East India Company to take measures for the advancement in useful knowledge, but the proposal was not carried. The Missionaries at Serampore, who had established themselves in the Danish settlement there to avoid expulsion by the



British Government, had started a number of schools. But the Government neglected the education of the people. This led to the gradual decay in the morals of the people. Lord Minto wrote in a minute on March 6, 1811:—

“It is a common remark that science and literature are in a progressive state of decay among the natives of India. From every inquiry which I have been enabled to make on this interesting subject that remark appears to me but too well founded. The number of the learned is not only diminished but the circle of learning even among those who still devote themselves to it appears to be considerably contracted. The abstract sciences are abandoned, polite literature neglected and no branch of learning cultivated but what is connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people. The immediate consequence of this state of things is the disuse and even actual loss of many valuable books; and it is to be apprehended that unless Government interpose with a fostering hand the revival of letters may shortly become hopeless from a want of books or of persons capable of explaining them.” The establishment of the Sanskrit College at Benares did not avert the decay. Lord Minto proposed that two additional colleges be established, one at Nādia and another at Bhowar in the district of Tirhoot. He also recommended that Mahomedan Colleges for Persian and Arabic education be established at Bhagalpur, Jaunpore and some other places in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces. But these proposals did not materialise.

At the time of the renewal of the Charter in 1813 Parliament laid down that at least one lakh of rupees a year should be “set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.” In

pursuance of this provision of the Charter Act the Court of Directors sent a Despatch to the Governor-General in 1814. Lord Moira as Governor-General drew up a minute giving details of the policy adopted by the Government. It is a comprehensive survey of the educational condition of India. Lord Moira wrote in that minute:

"That the native governments were not inattentive to the important object of public education, is evinced by the numerous grants of rent-free land, and of pecuniary allowances, for the endowment of public seminaries and the education of the particular descriptions of pupils. But in the general disregard of established institutions which appears to have marked the steps of the British Government hitherto, their appropriation has been lost sight of, and the funds have through an inattention been converted into private property by native individuals." The noble Governor-General remarked that the idea was current among the people that the prevalence of vice was not sufficiently discountenanced by the rulers. In discussing the idea of supporting the existing institutions he said:

"The immediate encouragement of the superior descriptions of science by any bounty to the existing native colleges, appears to me a project altogether delusive. I do not believe that in these retreats there remain any embers capable of being fanned into life. It is true, the form of tuition is kept up in them, but the ceremony is gone through by men who are (as far as I could learn) devoid of comprehension in the very branches they profess to teach."

He had a poor opinion of the teaching imparted at Benares but he felt that "It is satisfactory to find that there are many natives of birth and education who still feel an anxiety for the improvement of the general morals. For it is through their agency that such a

measure is most likely to succeed." He concluded by saying: "The lapse of half a century and the operation of that principle have produced a new state of society, which calls for a more enlarged and liberal policy. The moral duties require encouragement and experiment. The arts which adorn and embellish life, will follow in ordinary course. It is for the credit of the British name, that this beneficial revolution should arise under British sway. To be the source of blessings to the immense population of India is an ambition worthy of our country. In proportion as we have found intellect neglected and sterile here, the obligation is the stronger on us to cultivate it. The field is noble: may we till it worthily."

In spite of these noble sentiments of the successive Governors-General the situation did not improve. For the mass education a Society called the Calcutta School Book Society was formed in 1817 to provide suitable text-books and another Society under the name of the Calcutta School Society was founded in 1819 to establish schools throughout the country. The Government appointed a General Committee of Public Instruction on July 17, 1823 for the purpose of ascertaining the state of education and of considering measures for the better instruction of the people. The Hon'ble Mr. J. H. Harington, Judge of the Supreme Court was appointed Chairman, and Mr. H. H. Wilson, Secretary of the Committee.

The scheme of establishing colleges for the study of Sanskrit at Nadia and Tirhut had failed and Government founded instead a Sanskrit College at Calcutta in 1821, on the model of the Benares College. The new college was expected not only to help the cultivation of Hindu literature but also the gradual diffusion of European knowledge. The British India Society sent, by the permission of the Court of Directors, an expensive philosophical apparatus to be placed at the disposal of

the College in 1823. But the General Committee of Public Instruction did not feel very enthusiastic over the idea of providing education in scientific subjects although the Governor-General gave some instructions about it, and the steps they took in imparting useful instructions proved a failure. The General Committee of Public Instruction defended their action by saying that public feeling was against the introduction of Western learning. Their attitude was based upon wrong assumption as will be seen from the letter of Rammohun Roy to Lord Amherst. Suspecting the unwillingness of the Committee to make innovations on the lines suggested by the Court of Directors and the eminent philanthropists Rammohun Roy wrote out an appeal to the Governor-General and handed it over to Bishop Heber to be submitted to Lord Amherst. About this letter the Bishop writes in his Memoirs:

“Rammohun Roy, a learned native, who has sometimes been called, though I fear without reason, a Christian, remonstrated against this (Eastern) system last year, in a paper, which he sent me to be put into Lord Amherst's hand, and which for its good English, good sense, and forcible arguments, is a real curiosity, as coming from an Asiatic. But the members of the Committee to whom the letter was referred thought of it otherwise. Mr. J. H. Harington, Chairman of the Committee, wrote: “It was entitled to no reply, as it has disingenuously assumed a character to which it has no pretensions. The application to Government against the cultivation of Hindu literature, and in favour of the substitution of European tuition, is made professedly on the part, and in the name of the natives of India. But it bears the signature of one individual alone, whose opinions are well known to be hostile to those entertained by almost all his countrymen. The letter of Rammohun Roy does not, therefore, express the opinion of any portion of the natives of India, and its assertion

to that effect, is a dereliction of truth, which cancels the claim of its author to respectful consideration."

The controversy of Oriental learning as against Western learning went on for twelve years till the arrival of Thomas Babington Macaulay, as Law Member of the Council, and whom Lord William Bentinck appointed Chairman of the Committee in place of Mr. Harington. Macaulay after careful consideration of the matter gave a slashing reply to the arguments of the Orientalists led by H. T. Prinsep and H. H. Wilson, and vindicated Rammohun Roy. The letter of Rammohun Roy has been selected by Sir Henry Sharp as a document of great importance, and we reproduce it here in full:

"To

His Excellency the Right Hon'ble.

William Pitt, Lord Amherst

"My Lord,

Humbly reluctant as the natives of India are to obtrude upon the notice of Government the sentiments they entertain on any public measure, there are circumstances when silence would be carrying this respectful feeling to culpable excess. The present Rulers of India, coming from a distance of many thousand miles to govern a people whose language, literature, manners, customs, and ideas are almost entirely new and strange to them, cannot easily become so intimately acquainted with their real circumstances, as the natives of the country are themselves. We should therefore be guilty of a gross dereliction of duty to ourselves, and afford our Rulers just ground of complaint at our apathy, did we omit on occasions of importance like the present to supply them with such accurate information as might enable them to devise and adopt measures calculated to be beneficial to the country, and thus second by our local knowledge and experience their declared benevolent intentions for its improvement.

“The establishment of a new Sanskrit School in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of the Government to improve the Natives of India by Education,—a blessing for which they must ever be grateful; and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts made to promote it should be guided by the most enlightened principles, so that the stream of intelligence may flow into the most useful channels.

“When this Seminary of learning was proposed, we understood that the Government in England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its Indian subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European Gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences, which the Nations of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.

“While we looked forward with pleasing hope to the dawn of knowledge thus promised to the rising generation, our hearts were filled with mingled feelings of delight and gratitude; we have already offered up thanks to Providence for inspiring the most generous and enlightened of the Nations of the West with the glorious ambitions of planting in Asia the Arts and Sciences of modern Europe.

“We now find that the Government are establishing a Sanskrit School under Hindoo Pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This Seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago, with

the addition of vain and empty subtleties since produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India.

“The Sanskrit language, so difficult that almost a life time is necessary for its perfect acquisition, is well known to have been for ages a lamentable check on the diffusion of knowledge; and the learning concealed under this almost impervious veil is far from sufficient to reward the labour of acquiring it. But if it were thought necessary to perpetuate this language for the sake of the portion of the valuable information it contains, this might be much more easily accomplished by other means than the establishment of a new Sanskrit College; for there have been always and are now numerous professors of Sanskrit in the different parts of the country, engaged in teaching this language as well as the other branches of literature which are to be the object of the new Seminary. Therefore their more diligent cultivation, if desirable, would be effectually promoted by holding out premiums and granting certain allowances to those most eminent Professors, who have already undertaken on their own account to teach them, and would by such rewards be stimulated to still greater exertions.

“From these considerations, as the sum set apart for the instruction of the Natives of India was intended by the Government in England, for the improvement of its Indian subjects, I beg leave to state, with due deference to your Lordship’s exalted situation, that if the plan now adopted be followed, it will completely defeat the object proposed; since no improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume a dozen of years of the most valuable periods of their lives in acquiring the niceties of the Byakurun or Sanskrit Grammar. For instance, in learning to discuss such points as the following: *Khad* signifying to eat, *Khaduti*, he or she

or it eats. Query, whether does the word *Khaduti*, taken as a whole, convey the meaning by distinct portions of the word? As if in the English language it were asked, how much meaning is there in the *eat*, how much in the *s*? and is the whole meaning of the word conveyed by those two portions of it distinctly, or by them taken jointly?

“Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following, which are the themes suggested by the Vedant:—In what manner is the soul absorbed into the deity? What relation does it bear to the divine essence? Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines, which teach them to believe that all visible things have no real existence; that as father, brother, etc. have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better.

“Again, no essential benefit can be derived by the student of the *Meemangsa* from knowing what it is that makes the killer of a goat sinless by pronouncing certain passages of the Veds, and what is the real nature and operative influence of the passages of the Ved, etc.

“Again the student of the Nyaya Shastra cannot be said to have improved his mind after he has learned from it in how many ideal classes the objects in the Universe are divided and what speculative relation, the soul bears to the body, the body to the soul, the eye to the ear, etc.

“In order to enable your Lordship to appreciate the utility of encouraging such imaginary learning as above characterized, I beg your Lordship will be pleased to compare the state of science and literature in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon, with the progress of knowledge made since he wrote.



“If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy, with other useful sciences which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus.

“In representing this subject to your Lordship I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen and also to that enlightened Sovereign and Legislature which have extended their benevolent cares to this distant land actuated by a desire to improve its inhabitants and I therefore humbly trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus expressing my sentiments to your Lordship.

I have, etc.,

RAMMOHUN ROY.”

Calcutta:

*The 11th December, 1823.*

In this letter Rammohun pleaded for Western education which was expected to develop the minds of the Indians on the modern lines. He did not desire the abolition of Oriental studies as many critics would like to read in this letter, but he wanted that education should be as useful as it was possible in the circum-

tances of India. The Committee of Public Instruction dismissed the letter with a sneer, but they could not suppress the time-spirit. The new ideals swept away the dogmatic obstinacy of the old school, and "It took twelve years of controversy, the advocacy of Macaulay. decisive action of a new Governor-General, before the Committee could, as a body, acquiesce in the policy" urged by Rammohun, says the Report of the Education Commission, appointed by Lord Ripon in 1882.

The party led by Prinsep and Wilson persisted in giving education in Sanskrit and Arabic. "It is one of the most unintelligible facts in the history of English Education in India," says A. P. Howell in his *Education in British India* "that at the very time when the natives themselves were crying out for instruction in European literature and science and were protesting against a continuance of the prevailing orientalism, a body of English gentlemen appointed to initiate a system of education for the country was found to insist upon the retention of oriental learning to the practical exclusion of European learning." Macaulay's Minute is a masterly production and it gave the last blow to the Oriental system. He wrote in his inimitable style:

"What we spend on the Arabic and Sanskrit Colleges is not merely a dead loss to the cause of truth. It is bounty-money paid to the champions of error. It goes to form a nest not merely of helpless place-hunters but of bigots prompted alike by passion and by saying that to raise a cry against every useful scheme of education." Macaulay supported Rammohun Roy by saying that the Sanskrit and Arabic are languages the knowledge of which does not compensate for the trouble of acquiring them. Neither Rammohun nor Macaulay was against the study of the great Oriental classics, and they both were anxious to enrich the vernacular as is evident from the following passage in the latter's famous Minute. "We

must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

Whatever Rammohun urged in respectful language Macaulay pressed for in a forceful manner. The names of Rammohun, Macaulay and Bentinck should therefore go down to posterity as the pioneers of modern education in India. The Western system of education has stimulated scientific enquiry, helped the development of the Provincial languages and the most important of all, has created a spirit of self-reliance in the minds of the Indians. A New India has been created as a result of the policy suggested by Rammohun. There is no doubt that he represented the best interests of India. Mr. Harington dismissed Rammohun's letter as coming from an individual and that he had not the support of his countrymen who desired nothing but Oriental learning. Macaulay's retort to this argument was significant: "It is said that we ought to secure the co-operation of the native public, and that we can do this only by teaching Sanskrit and Arabic. I can by no means admit that when a nation of high intellectual attainments undertakes to superintend the education of a nation comparatively ignorant, the learners are absolutely to prescribe the course which is to be taken by the teachers. It is not necessary however to say anything on this subject. For it is proved by unanswerable evidence, that we are not at present securing the co-operation of the natives. It would be bad enough to consult their intellectual taste at the

expense of their intellectual health. But we are consulting neither. We are withholding from them the learning which is palatable to them. We are forcing on them the mock learning which they nauseate."

Lord William Bentinck accepted the policy advocated by Rammohun and so ably championed by Macaulay in the Resolution of March 7, 1835, and brought the controversy to a close. It was announced that it was the great object of the British Government to promote the cultivation of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone, without of course abolishing the existing institutions for Oriental learning.

That Rammohun Roy was anxious to put into practical shape the ideas of education is seen from the establishment of the Vedanta College in about 1825 at the house No. 74 in Maniktala Street. Mr. William Adam wrote about it on July 27, 1826: -

"Rammohun Roy has lately built a small but very neat and handsome college, which he calls the Vedanta College, in which a few youths are at present instructed by a very eminent Pandit, in Sanskrit literature, with a view to the propagation and defence of Hindu Unitarianism. With this institution he is also willing to connect instructions in European science and learning, and in Christian Unitarianism, provided the instructions are conveyed in the Bengali or Sanskrit language."

Rammohun Roy was not satisfied with the system of education then imparted in the Hindu seminaries. The literature of the Hindus was not interpreted in the true spirit and all the branches of learning were twisted in the interests of the priests and old superstitious persons. The idea was formed from a reading of his letter to Lord Amherst that he was opposed to the different

branches of the Sanskrit learning, but the ideals followed in the Vedanta College do not allow us to form such a conclusion. The ancient Hindu Sastras required careful study in the light of the modern thoughts. Rammohun found in them rich treasures of inestimable value and tried to revive their studies in a way that might strengthen the national consciousness and inspire the love of the true God. He really desired the combination of Eastern learning with the Western science and philosophy. The college he established did not long continue. On his departure for England a large portion of his property was sold up along with the house where the Vedanta College was held.

### **Support to Alexander Duff.**

Although the relations of Rammohun with the missionaries of the Baptist Society became strained he maintained his friendly relations with the Scottish Mission. He used to attend their Church in Dalhousie Square. The Chaplain of this Church, the Rev. James Bryce had talks with Rammohun about the future work of the Scottish Mission. As a result of their deliberations a petition was sent to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to send out some missionaries to India to carry out educational work. Rammohun in a separate note urged the Assembly to comply with the petition and seven years afterwards, in 1830, Dr. Alexander Duff, then a young man fresh from the University came out to India to lay the foundation of the great educational mission. On his arrival in Calcutta Duff received a welcome from all parties. We quote passages from the Life of Duff by George Smith to indicate how much the great evangelist was supported by Rammohun:

“It was a directly providential combination of circumstances, which culminated in the Scottish

evangelisation of the Hindus by education. These were the sermons of Chalmers and Inglis in 1812-18; the call of Alexander Duff in 1828; his wise independence and his wiser disobedience of the only command laid upon him; his unrivalled educational experience as well as spiritual energy; the revolution in belief and opinion



The Rev. *Alexander Duff* D.D.

begun by the Hindu College; the official toleration and personal friendship shown by the Governor-General; and lastly, that to which we now come, the help of the one Hindu whom English teaching had led to find the living God.

"In a pleasant garden-house in the leafy suburb of Calcutta, the Raja Rammohun Roy, then fifty-six years of age, was spending his declining days in meditation on divine truth, broken only by works of practical benevolence among his countrymen, and soon by preparations for a visit to England, where in 1834 (1833), he yielded to the uncongenial climate. 'You must at once visit the Raja,' said General Beatson, when Mr. Duff presented his letter of introduction," and I will drive you out on an early evening. "Save by Duff himself afterwards, justice has never been done to this Erasmus of India."

Then George Smith gives a brief sketch of the Raja's life, and writes: "His attitude to Brahmanism was still that of Erasmus towards Romanism. He believed he could purify the popular religion its 'perversion' while falling back on its early purity. His attacks on idolatry, his declaration of the equality of all living creatures under the moral government of God, and their duty to worship Him according to the most sacred mysteries of the Vedas, roused at once the superstitious fear and the aristocratic selfishness of the orthodox families. They met the Brahma Sabha by instituting the Dharma Sabha to uphold the Brahmanism and all its consequences, such as Sati and the denial of civil and religious liberty, of property and marriage to dissidents from idolatry. Thus Bengali society became divided into opposing camps, while the Hindu College youths formed a third entrenchment in support of pure atheism and libertinism. These were the three powers at work, unconnected by any agency save the influence of English literature in the hands of vicious teachers, unopposed by Christianity in any form, denounced at a distance, and not once fairly grappled with by any Christian man. The Serampore missionaries, indeed, had taken a part in the conflict, and their quarterly *Friend of India* had given voice to Christ's teaching on

all subjects, human and divine. But they were not on the spot; and they made the mistake of fighting Rammohun Roy instead of first using him as an ally against the common foe, and then educating him up to the revealed standard."

It is a pity that the educated Christians could not come up to the standpoint of Rammohun and could not rise above the method of utilising him. They could not fully appreciate the cosmopolitan spirit of the great reformer and his principle of universal brotherhood. They used to come to him for the help they received in their work, but they do not seem to have expressed unqualified sympathy for his programme of work. Rammohun had to fight superstition and atheism on the one hand and bigotry, racial prejudice and the consciousness of race superiority on the other. His was a singular mission in spreading the ideals of faith in One God and rational approach towards Divinity by the unfolding of the intellect. Revelation divorced from reason did not appeal to him. On the other hand he was shocked at the way the young Bengalis were behaving after receiving godless education in the Hindu College at the hands of an Anglo-Indian young man named Henry DeRozio. He desired education which would make man love God and serve his fellow-country men. He did not believe in education which did not teach sound morals. He had great sympathy for education mixed up with moral and religious training, and in that spirit welcomed the ideas of Alexander Duff. George Smith thus describes:

"Having listened to the young Scotsman's statement of his plans, Rammohun Roy expressed general approval. All true education, the reformer emphatically declared, ought to be religious since the object was not merely to give information, but to develop and regulate all the powers of the mind, the emotions, and



the workings of the conscience. Though himself not a Christian by profession, he had studied the Bible, and declared that, as a book of religious and moral instruction, it was unequalled. As a believer in God he also felt that everything should be begun by imploring His blessing. He therefore approved of the opening of the proposed school with prayer to God.

"Then, of his own accord, he added that, having studied the Vedas, the Koran, and the Tripitakas of the Buddhists, he nowhere found any prayer so brief and all-comprehensive as that which Christians called the Lord's Prayer. Till, therefore, Mr. Duff had sufficiently mastered the Bengali and his pupils the English, he recommended them to study and daily use the Lord's Prayer in the Bengali or English, according to circumstances. But he entirely approved of using the English language, and not the Bengali, Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit, for conveying sound European knowledge. This led him also to remark that he disapproved of Government having established a Sanskrit College in Calcutta: against which at the time of its establishment, he solemnly protested, on the ground that, instead of thereby enlightening the native mind according to the intention of the British Parliament, the authorities were confirming it in error."

Not only Rammohun gave Duff moral support his help was sought in finding a suitable house for the school and also students. Duff had difficulty in finding a house, as owing to caste prejudices the Indians were not willing to let a house to a European for European purposes. Rammohun Roy offered the house which the Brahma Samaj had vacated when it shifted to his own house, on a reduced rental, and persuaded his friends to send their sons to the school. When making over charge of the building to Duff he pointed out to a punkha suspended from the roof, and said with a smile, "I leave you that as my legacy."

Duff had some trouble in getting pupils as he was resolved to teach the Bible in every class, but Rammohun succeeded in breaking the prejudices of the early students. George Smith gives the following story regarding the beginning of the School:

“After a few days five bright-eyed youths of the higher class, mostly Brahmanical, called upon Mr. Duff, with a note stating that these five, with the full consent of their friends, were ready to attend him whenever he might open the school. Having met in the hall with the five on a day appointed (13th July, 1830), Mr. Duff explained to them, in a general way his plans. In a day or two several new youths appeared along with them requesting admission. On every successive morning there was a fresh succession of applicants, till classification and weeding out became necessary. When that had been done, a day was fixed for the public opening of the school, at ten a.m., when Rammohun was present to explain difficulties, and especially to remove the prejudice against reading the Bible. The eventful day was the 13th of July, 1830.

“Mr. Duff was ready. Standing up with Rammohun Roy, while all the lads showed the same respect as their own Raja, the Christian Missionary prayed the Lord's Prayer slowly in Bengali. A sight, an hour, ever to be remembered! Then came the more critical act. Himself putting a copy of the Gospels into their hands, the missionary requested some of the older pupils to read. There was murmuring of the Brahmans among them, and this found voice in the Bengali protest of a leader.—‘This is the Christian Shaster. We are not Christians; how then can we read it? It may make us Christians, and our friends will drive us out of caste.’ Now was the time for Rammohun Roy, who explained to his young countrymen that they were mistaken. ‘Christians like Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson have

studied the Hindu scriptures, and you know that he has not become a Hindu. I myself have read all the Koran again and again, and has that made me a Musalman? Nay, I have studied the whole Bible, and you know I am not a Christian. Why, then, do you fear to read it? Read and judge for yourself. Not compulsion, but enlightened persuasion which you may resist if you choose constitutes you judges of the contents of the book.' Most of the remonstrants seemed satisfied. Daily for the next month did the Hindu reformer visit the school at ten for the Bible lesson, and frequently thereafter till he left for England, when his eldest son (Radhaprosad Roy) continued to encourage the boys by his presence and their teachers by friendly counsel."

Duff thus received all the help that Rammohun could render. But it is strange that all the Christian Missionaries kept aloof and tried to dissuade him from the course. One of them warned him that his coming to India might thereby prove a curse rather than a blessing. But for Rammohun the young Scottish evangelist would have met with great difficulty in founding the school. We have now in Calcutta the Scottish Churches College as the monument of the labours of Duff in co-operation with Rammohun Roy.

Inspired by the example of Rammohun his friend Kalynath Munsî of Taki offered buildings and appliances for a school in his village to be supervised by Duff, and to be staffed by men approved of by the Christian educationist. On account of these helps received from Rammohun, Duff wrote in a letter to Dr. Chalmers: "He has rendered me the most valuable and efficient assistance in prosecuting some of the objects of the General Assembly's Mission."

Rammohun was anxious for the spread of education and was happy to receive the services of the Scottish Missionaries in disseminating Western learning among

his countrymen. He welcomed these missionaries specially because they would combine moral with secular education. He desired true education which would develop all the faculties of man, and therefore approved of the plan of young Duff.

### **Pioneer in Indian Journalism.**

He not only suggested the lines of advance in removing the illiteracy of his countrymen and established institutions at his own expense, and co-operated with others in evolving a sound system of education, he also started other ventures for the enlightenment of his people. Along with the British Rule India learnt the new method of carrying light to the people by means of periodical prints. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were a few journals published by Englishmen, but the officials did not always look upon them with favour. These journalists were dealt with severely for criticising actions of officials or referring to personal weaknesses of the Governors. Lord Hastings relaxed these regulations and the newspapers felt encouraged to write freely. Indians also came into the field shortly. In 1816 a gentleman named Gangadhar Bhattacharya published a paper under the title of *Bangla Gazette*. But it was so short-lived that people never knew of its existence. The missionaries at Serampore, who have to their credit a number of useful institutions, started the Bengali weekly *Samachar Darpan*, with Dr. J. C. Marshman as editor in 1818. The paper had an unbroken career till 1841, and many public workers had to resort to the columns of this paper in expressing their views. Although it was owned and edited by the European missionaries its actual work was carried on by Bengali Pandits. Rammohun felt the necessity of having a paper managed by the Indians, and started on December 4, 1821, a Bengali weekly

under the title of *Sambad Kaumudi*. It was, in a way, the first newspaper conducted by the Bengalis. The object of the paper was to render public good and to promote the welfare of the Bengalis. Subjects likely to be useful, instructive and entertaining were dealt with in the paper. Rammohun himself contributed many thoughtful articles, some of which have been reprinted in his Bengali Works edited by Rajnarayan Bose and Anandachandra Vedantabagish. They show how comprehensive was the scope of the paper and how ably Rammohun employed pure idiomatic Bengali. Unfortunately the old copies of the paper cannot be traced. On account of vague informaton there was some dispute regarding the date of the first publication of the paper. The Rev. Mr. Long mentioned in the list of Bengali publications that it was published in 1819 and printed at the Sanskrit Press. A similar information is also found in a list published in the *Christian Observer* of 1840. Evidently the source of information in both the cases was not quite authentic, because the announcement regarding the publication first appeared in an issue of the *Calcuta Journal* of 1821. Rammohun had as his coadjutor an able writer named Bhawani Charan Banerji. But this man held different views from Rammohun regarding the social questions, specially the *Sati*. After its thirteenth issue Bhawani Charan cut off his connection with the *Kaumudi* and started a rival paper called the *Samachar Chandrika*. The damage inflicted upon the *Kaumudi* by this rival was so great that it had to stop publication for a few months (September, 1822 to April, 1823). It was revived under the editorship of Ananda Chandra Mookherjee in April, 1823, and was converted into a Bi-weekly in 1830, and survived the founder. We find in a list published in the *Banga Doot* of 1829 that in that year the name of the editor was Haladhar Bose. A Bengali paper named *Timir Nasak* in a brief survey of the Bengali papers in

Calcutta wrote in 1832 that Bhawani Charan Banerjee and Tarachand Dutt were the founders of the *Kaumudi*, and a gentleman named James Calder helped the publication very considerably. After three months of the publication Harihar Dutt, son of Tarachand Dutt, supported the anti-Sati propaganda in the paper and this brought about a rupture with Bhawani Charan who established a new paper. In the competition between the *Kaumudi* and the *Chandrika* the former suffered very greatly. Latterly it was taken over by Radha Prosad Roy, son of Rammohun Roy, and conducted with the help of Dwarkanath Tagore and Kalynath Munsî. Bhawani Charan became the Secretary of the Dharma Sabha and did his best to counteract the influence of Rammohun. But there is no doubt that the *Kaumudi* which was the first newspaper conducted by the Indians, contributed very considerably to the growth of healthy public opinion in this country.

Persian was then the court language in Bengal and it occupied the same position in society as does English now. It was on account of this that Rammohun Roy undertook the publication of a weekly paper in Persian. The first issue of *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* came out on the 12th April, 1822. This was the first weekly of this kind in Calcutta. The Persian paper used to appear on every Friday and the Bengali weekly on Tuesday. The articles in this paper were mostly written by Rammohun, and many of these were rendered into English in the columns of the *Calcutta Journal* by James Silk Buckingham. From the very beginning the paper drew the attention of the people as it dealt with all interesting topics. The nature of the paper may be gathered from the contents of the first issue:

1. The Editorial note in which the Editor informs the public that although so many newspapers have been published in Calcutta, there was none in Persian for the

benefit of those who did not understand English particularly in Upper Hindusthan.

2. Government regulation respecting the period of absence, which the servants of the Company could avail themselves of, on account of their health.

3. Difference with China.

4. Trial of John Hayes, Esq., Judge of Tipperah.

5. Release of prisoners on the King's Birthday (23rd April).

6. Cause of Enmity between Russia and the Sublime Porte.

7. Exploits of Ranjit Singh.

8. Shipping Intelligence.

9. Report of crops in Hindusthan.

10. Pair of elephants for sale.

11. Price of Indigo and Opium.

12. Proposal of an English school in Delhi.

The topics selected were very comprehensive as not only to suit all tastes but also to afford sufficient instruction. Both the papers, the *Kaumudi* and the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* dealt with politics, and current topics and published articles on historical, literary and scientific subjects. Attention of the public was not only drawn to the problems of this country, but also to the problems engaging the attention of the people in other parts of the world, such as the Irish question, the Chinese problems, the struggle in Greece, etc. The comments appearing in the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* in connection with the death of Bishop Middleton touched the Christian susceptibilities and in a Minute drawn up by W. B. Bayley of the Supreme Council regarding the tendency of the native Press the attitude of the paper is noted as offensive.

An article on the Irish situation dealt with all the root causes of discontent, the Church question, the absent landlordism, the tithe, and other things. It shows the thorough grasp of the writer of all the complexities

which troubled the British statesmen. The writer could strike all notes, from the serious to the satirical. He expressed his views boldly and courageously where he differed from the authorities, although the general policy of the paper was to maintain good relations with the Government and the British people.

The officials very often felt uncomfortable whenever newspapers passed comments about them or their religion. On the 9th January, 1823, Lord Hastings left India, and a subordinate official named J. Adam acted as Governor-General in his place. An arbitrary action of this Acting Governor-General was noticed in the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* of February:

"The eminently learned Dr. Bryce, the head minister of the new Scotch Church, having accepted the situation of Clerk of the Stationery belonging to the Honourable Company, Mr. Buckingham, the editor of the *Calcutta Journal* observed directly as well as indirectly that it was unbecoming of the character of the minister to accept a situation like this; upon which the Governor-General, in respect of his disrespectful expression passed an order that Mr. Buckingham should leave India for England within the period of two months from the date of the receipt of this order, and after the expiration of that period he is not allowed to remain a single day in India."

Shortly after the publication of the order the *Journal* was suppressed, and its Assistant Editor, Mr. Sandford Arnot, was, arrested and placed in a vessel bound for the British Isles. This was not all. The Government was bent upon crushing the liberty of the Press, and on March 14, the Acting Governor-General promulgated an Ordinance which required the editors and proprietors to take out licenses from the Government, which must be signed by the Chief Secretary. According to law an Ordinance had to be registered by



the Supreme Court before it could be enforced. The procedure followed was that the Government had to enter the Ordinance and to move the Court for its registration and then twenty days' time was allowed to the aggrieved parties to make their representation. The Ordinance was entered on the 15th and on the 17th the parties were asked to submit their objections on the 31st March. The sole Acting Judge Sir Francis Macnaghten suggested that the parties would do well if they represented their case in a memorial to the Government.

Rammohun Roy took the lead in getting up a memorial, but it was not ready for presentation till the 30th March and even then the memorial contained only fifteen signatures, and there was no time for the Council to consider it. Consequently Rammohun very hastily got up a memorial to the Supreme Court, and submitted it through counsel. Messrs. Fergusson and Turnot argued the case on behalf of the memorialists. But the Court did not pay any need to these arguments, and the Judge remarked without the least hesitation that he had pledged himself to give the Ordinance sanction before it came up to the Court or its merits argued before him. The memorialists then resolved to appeal to the King-in-Council. The task of drawing up the Petition was entrusted to Rammohun. The case was put in dignified language and the Petition stands even now as a remarkable piece of composition in defence of the rights of the citizens. In the meantime as a protest against arbitrary action of the Government Rammohun suspended the publication of his Persian weekly, *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*. The *Calcutta Journal* of the 10th April, 1823, rendered into English the editorial note of the last issue of the *Mirat*. The passages quoted here are of great historic value, and we are indebted to Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerji for reproducing them from the old files of the Journal:

"It was previously intimated, that a Rule and Ordinance was promulgated by His Excellency the Honourable the Governor-General in Council, enacting, that a Daily, Weekly, or any Periodical Paper should not be published in this City, without an Affidavit being made by its proprietor in the Police Office, and without a License being procured for such publication from the Chief Secretary to the Government; and that after such License being obtained, it is optional for the Governor-General to recall the same, whenever His Excellency may be dissatisfied with any part of the Paper. Be it known, that on the 31st of March, the Honourable Sir Francis Macnaghten, Judge of the Supreme Court, expressed his approbation of the Rule and Ordinance so passed. Under these circumstances, I, the least of all the human race, in consideration of several difficulties, have, with much regret and reluctance, relinquished the publication of this Paper (*Mirat-ool-Akhbar*). The difficulties are these:—

"*First*.—Although it is very easy for those European Gentlemen, who have the honour to be acquainted with the Chief Secretary to Government to obtain a License according to the prescribed form; yet to a humble individual like myself, it is very hard to make his way through the porters and attendants of a great Personage; or to enter the doors of the Police Court, crowded with people of all classes, for the purpose of obtaining what is in fact, ready (?) in my opinion. (Here follows a Persian couplet.)

"*Secondly*.—To make Affidavit voluntarily in an open Court, in presence of respectable Magistrates, is looked upon as very mean and censurable by those who watch the conduct of their neighbours. Besides, the publication of a newspaper is not incumbent upon every person, so that he must resort to the evasion of establishing fictitious Proprietors, which is contrary to Law, and repugnant to Conscience.

“*Thirdly*.—After incurring the disrepute of solicitation and suffering the dishonour of making Affidavit, the constant apprehension of the License being recalled by Government which would disgrace the person in the eyes of the world, must create such anxiety as entirely to destroy his peace of mind, because a man, by nature liable to err, in telling the real truth cannot help sometimes making use of words and selecting phrases that might be unpleasant to Government. I, however, here prefer silence to speaking out. (Another couplet from Hafiz)

“I now entreat those kind and liberal gentlemen of Persia and Hindusthan, who have honoured the *Miratool-Akhbar* with their patronage, that, in considerations of the reasons above stated, they will excuse the non-fulfilment of my promise to make them acquainted with passing events, as stated in the introductory remarks in the first number; and I earnestly hope from their liberality, that wherever and however I may be situated they will always consider me, the humblest of the human race, as devoted to their service.”

The *Mirat* had scarcely a year's life and it was stopped on account of the terms of the Press Ordinance. But the *Kaumudi* continued to appear under a different editor.

Rammohun was associated with another journalistic venture. In 1829 a paper was started in English, Bengali, Persian and Hindi. The English paper under the name of *Hindu Herald* (*Bengal Herald*) was edited by Montgomery Martin, and the Bengali under the name of *Banga-Doot* was edited by Nilratan Halder. The papers came out every Sunday from the *Banga Doot Press* in Banstala Lane. Rammohun Roy, Dwarka Nath Tagore, Prasannocoomar Tagore, Rajkrishna Singh and Radhanath Mitra were joint proprietors of the papers. On the charge of publishing a libellous

writing against an attorney the editor of the *Bengal Herald* was found guilty and the paper had to be discontinued.

### Contributions to Bengali Literature.

Rammohun's was a constructive genius, and he gave the best in him to the service of his countrymen and humanity. Of all his activities the contribution to the Bengali literature was of a permanent value. Before him Bengali practically had no literature in prose. In an illuminating article in the *Literary Gazette* Kasi Prosad Ghose gave a survey of the Bengali literature down to 1830. He wrote that Bengali prose could not be traced before 1800. The missionaries at Serampore used to write in prose, but they could not write in idiomatic Bengali, and their language was not intelligible to the common people. Mrityunjay Vidyalkar wrote a book in prose entitled "Rajabali." It was supposed to be a history of India, but its language was not correct Bengali and it contained lots of stories which could hardly be said to be historical. Another book entitled "Purusha-Pariksha" was published by a Pandit named Haraprosad Roy, in 1815, but this book was worse than that of Mrityunjay Vidyalkar. The tracts published by Rammohun Roy were the earliest books in perfect idiomatic Bengali. The translations of the Vedanta and the Upanishads, the tracts on the Sati and the other works showed how the vernacular of Bengal could be used in expressing the noblest sentiments. The style of the *Sambad Kaumudi* was plain and sweet, the diction perfect. In order to convey his ideas to the masses he always made use of the vernacular. Mr William Adam who after he had left the Unitarian Mission became the Commissioner of Vernacular Education in Bengal, Behar and Orissa, and held other

important positions under the Government later on, such as Clerk of Stationery, Commissioner of the Small Causes Court, and Editor of the *Indian Gazette*, left for America in 1838. There in a speech at Boston he said: "No one saw more distinctly than Rammohun Roy the importance of cultivating the vernacular language of his countrymen as the most effectual medium of conveying instruction to them, and influencing their sentiments, principles and conduct; and in consequence all his most important controversial writings have appeared not only in Sanskrit for the information of the learned and in English for the information of foreigners, but in Bengali also, that the body of the people might be enlightened. In this, he showed the just and accurate view which he took of the means of influencing the minds of a whole people and his superiority to the prejudices of his learned countrymen who disdain to compose their works, except in Sanskrit; and look down upon their mother-tongue with contempt as unworthy to be employed for the communication of knowledge."

"Rammohun Roy's writings in Bengali are models of composition" says Adam, "a necessary effect of his comprehensive and logical mind, and correct and manly taste. It was not only in this indirect and accidental way that he sought to improve his native idiom, he also wrote and published a grammar of the Bengali language, which, although several grammars of that tongue have been written by Europeans, is the only one worthy of the name; and he has thus by the example he set in his own multifarious native composition, and by the theoretical rules which he has laid down in his grammar, contributed to rescue from contempt and neglect, and bring into deserved repute, a language possessing very rich materials, spoken by twenty-five millions of human beings, and destined to be the medium of communication on all the subjects of

literature and science, philosophy and religion interesting to a people in a state of progressive civilization."

To a student of Bengali in the twentieth century it seems how true was the prophecy of Adam, and how penetrating was the genius of Rammohun Roy. He introduced the modern style of writing prose with proper punctuation. It seems in the writings before him, the signs comma, semi-colon etc. were not to be found. In the translation of the Vedanta he explains how these signs have to be used. In the Bengali Grammar published in 1826 he made a systematic and scientific study of the language and its idioms. He first wrote it in English for the use of the Europeans. But as there was no Grammar in Bengali he wrote it out in Bengali at the instance of the School Book Society, and the book was printed in April, 1833, when he was in England. It was the best book on the subject, and by 1851 it underwent four editions, without any alterations.

The style of writing in the *Sambad Kaumudi* was so impressive that some of the articles were included in a book of selections entitled "*Bangiya Pathabalee*" in 1854, and some of the articles were included in the Bengali Selections for the Entrance Examination for 1874 by the Calcutta University. These essays were of various topics, literary, political, social and scientific. Rammohun led the way in using the Bengali language for elegant expression in all subjects. Modern Bengali owes a great deal to him, as Modern India is indebted to him for the national awakening in various department. It is now the most progressive language in India and Rabindranath Tagore has raised it to the status of an important language of the world by his rich contributions. Rammohun was the pioneer in this field.

## CHAPTER VII

# THE AWAKENING OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

### The new ideals of life.

The highest ideal of man in India has been to seek salvation for himself by religious duties, by contemplation of the divine virtues, and when the world seemed too great an obstacle in his way, to renounce it and to go into retirement in the forests. Very few persons thought it noble to live for the community and to serve their fellow-beings. Absolutely individualistic in the spiritual endeavours they never exerted themselves for the removal of wrongs or for the promotion of public welfare. They submitted to the authority of priests in their religious practices, and the interpretation of the moral injunctions by the Brahmans without questioning the applicability of the rules. They never ventured to enquire into the principles of the social institutions. Their mentality was one of submission and acquiescence. It is on account of this attitude that the Afghans, Mughals and other foreigners had very little difficulty in establishing their authority over them or in ruling them. The long period of foreign domination made the Indians timid. They did not feel encouraged to express a desire for any improvement in their condition. In the Appeal to the King in Council against the Press Ordinance he wrote that the greater part of Hindusthan having been for several centuries subject to Muhammadan Rule, the civil and religious rights of its original inhabitants were trampled upon. In some parts the inhabitants rose against the oppressive rule, but in

Bengal the people wanting in vigour of and adverse to active exertion remained during the whole period of the Muhammadan conquest, faithful to the existing Government, although their property was often plundered, their religion insulted, and their blood wantonly shed. The advent of the British did not change the outlook of the people although they welcomed the newcomers with a view to get some relief from the old tyranny. The Indian mind was still dominated by fear and suspicion as the people had lost all faith in themselves.

Born in Bengal and brought up in circumstances described above Rammohun rose superior to his environment. In his youth he revolted against the customs of the country and evolved a plan of life entirely his own. He carefully considered the suggestions he received but did not accept anything unless it was sanctioned by reason. He was a free-thinker although he paid due respect to the ancient authorities. The chief mission of his life was to make his countrymen think for themselves and to seek the guidance of reason in the problems which perplex them. He translated the scriptures and distributed them free in order that the people might know exactly what the ancient Rishis thought and said. He appealed to them to give up the practices which were injuring the health of the community. Inspired by the urge of freedom he desired to extend it to all departments of life, social, political, religious and economic. He revolted against all sorts of coercion and oppression. "The Raja held that individual progress is the touchstone as well as the measuring rod of social progress;" says Sir Brajendra Nath Seal, "but the individual's progress could be secured only by organising and establishing the condition of social progress. Accordingly in practical ethics, the golden rule, the rule of individual reciprocity, was for him the guiding principle of conduct ; but at the same



time he found the inner moral life in the higher discipline of the soul, the ideal of *Nishkāma Karma*, work with dispassion, in the terms of the Gita. In social polity, he emphasised the natural rights of man, which would include the rights not only to life and property, but also to freedom of speech, opinion, conscience and association. And Law must secure to each individual his natural rights so far as they can be secured without infringement of the equal rights of others. But he spoke oftener in terms of happiness than of rights, and avoided the fallacious view of a positive social contract as constitutive of society. Accordingly he held that legislation, while aiming at the establishment of natural rights, must subordinate this criterion to the practical quest of the greatest happiness, or the happiness of the greatest number ; and social reform, while pursuing the ideals of individualistic justice and equality, must be dominated by the principle of *Lokasreyas*, or the common good. And true to the spirit of the East and the genius of India, he elevated these principles to the sphere of Dharma or duty, and thus brought his humanitarian religion as a motive power to the organisation of social polity." It was in this spirit of service to humanity as a part of his religion that Rammohun fought against the barbarous custom of *Sati*, worked for the establishment of brotherhood between the different communities, for the diffusion of knowledge, and for instilling in the minds of his fellow-countrymen the desire for a better living in freedom and comfort. His love of freedom was so comprehensive that he desired it to be established in every country and amongst all races. He was cosmopolitan in his sympathies and was never a narrow-minded chauvinist. He was prepared to accept good from everywhere, and the love of his country and his people never made him blind to the social iniquities rampant here. He was anxious to make his country worthy of the

love and veneration of millions of citizens by making it a better land than what it was. His patriotism was constructive and it sought its expression in bold works of public utility inspite of the opposition of the interested parties. His imagination soared high but it always had in view the uplift of his fellow-beings. This was the keynote of this noble life. We have already discussed the struggle he put up in eradicating the evil of the *Sati*, and in evolving a new ideal of education. In this chapter we shall deal with the other items of social reform that he advocated and the rights of the people which he tried to advance. He stands out amongst the Indians as the pioneer in all departments of life and he has therefore been called as one of the builders of Modern India. He gave to India a new religion, an inspiration in social and political movements, an ideal to strive for, and a programme to work out. He was an idealist but not a visionary. In his programme he never attempted the impossible. He tried whatever he considered practicable. In some cases he failed in his life time, but his programme has been taken up by others and some of his dreams have been fulfilled and for others the Indians are still fighting.

### **Rammohun's Ideas regarding Social Reform.**

The problems of life, social, economic, political, moral and religious cannot be separated although for the purpose of study and observation we may have to deal with them as isolated phenomena. Rammohun maintained this view. In his Introduction to the Abridgement of the Vedanta he wrote that he was anxious that his countrymen should be acquainted with their scriptures so that they might contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of God, because he was pained to see them suffering from the

inconvenient and injurious rites connected with the peculiar rites of Hindu idolatry. These rites he believed destroyed the texture of society. His chief thought in reviving interest in the Vedanta was the promotion of the comfort of his countrymen. Hindu idolatry implies the existence of many gods, and they have to be worshipped with the help of priests. And these deities were held in veneration of different grades. Sometimes there is rivalry between the presiding deities of the different localities and different sects. A Sakta would consider the goddess Sakti more powerful than any other deity, a Baisnava would consider Vishnu as supreme and a Saiva his Siva, besides these there are several rival deities claiming the devotion of their votaries. And in order to maintain the supremacy of these deities their worshippers quarrel and fight among themselves. The Hindu community is therefore split up into different groups. There is no unity amongst them and they quarrel over the rituals and modes of worship. Rammohun felt that this could be removed if only people worshipped one true God and not many gods. There was more unity among the Muhamadans because they worshipped one God. Rammohun consecrated his life to establish in India the worship of One God by all persons irrespective of caste and colour. His name is associated with the religious movement having this object in view, and he also worked that the worship of God should be held in the purest possible form so that man might hold direct communion with God without the intervention of intermediaries, dead or living. Direct worship of God gives courage and strength and removes all fear of worldly authority. The consciousness of one God makes men realise the brotherhood subsisting between the different members of the human community and creates sympathy between man and the sentient objects. The theology of Rammohun was therefore

very intimately connected with his social philosophy and political ideals. His religion was not self-centred but based upon the love of his countrymen and also of humanity.

Next to idolatry Rammohun felt bitterly the inconvenience of caste. Caste is responsible for many evils. It divides the community and stands in the way of the development of the manly virtues. A Brahman however ill-educated or immoral will receive the respects of the people, but a Sudra will always remain in the bottom even if he is deeply educated, highly cultured and is a man of very excellent character. This rigidity in the distinctions between the different classes makes it impossible for any sense of unity to grow. India has been the footstool of foreign invaders on account of the existence of the caste system. Rammohun therefore wrote in the *Brahmunical Magazine*: "We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries, and the cause of such degradation has been our excess in civilization and abstinence from the slaughter even of animals ; as well as our division into castes, which has been the source of want of unity among us." These reflections appear in his writings in 1821. In his dealings with others he tried to break down the fetters of caste. We have already seen that the orthodox Hindus objected to his remaining a member of the Hindu College on account of his association with the Muhammiadans. The Christians also used to mix with him freely. His house in Upper Circular Road was a meeting-place of Europeans and Indians and he used to invite to dinner many respectable Europeans. Fanny Parks in her *Wandering* describes a party given by Rammohun in 1823. She writes:—"The other evening we went to a party given by Rammohun Roy, a rich Bengalee baboo ; the grounds which are extensive, were well illuminated, and excellent fireworks displayed." In further describing

the party the writer says, "The house was very handsomely furnished, everything in European style, with the exception of the owner." The remarks are significant. Rammohun did everything to please his guests but he did not forget that he was an Indian.

In spite of his peculiar position in society Rammohun did not fear to argue against the caste system. In 1827 he published a tract containing the translation of *Bajra Suchi*, a work of Mrityunjayacharya. This publication is an interesting piece of document as it definitely proves that Rammohun desired to abolish the pernicious system. The chapter deals with the question of Brahminism, where does it reside? It is proved that the soul is not the Brahman, nor is the body, nor is the specie to which a being belongs, nor is the colour of the body, nor is religion, scholarship nor deed. A man is said to be a Brahman if he has experienced God in his life. Similarly about the Kshatriya, Vaishya, etc. The quality of man is determined by his character and attainments, and a man becomes a Brahman by knowing God. The existing caste-system has therefore no support. In spite of these views it is said that Rammohan did not discard his caste. He retained his sacred thread which was the mark of being a Brahman, and when he went to England he took with him a Brahman to cook his food. This was due to the fact that he was suffering from certain legal difficulties. If he had discarded all the symbols of caste he might have been expelled from his property. The Hindu Law did not allow him to discard the caste if he wanted to claim a share in his ancestral property. The disabilities were later on removed by the Government. But in the time of Rammohun people were not free to express their views. Rammohun did not claim to be a prophet, nor did he try to do anything revolutionary. He wanted to improve the existing condition and had to bear with the disabilities so long as they were not removed

by the Government. He could not afford to lose his property, because with its help he could render so much benevolent work. The literature he published, the schools he established or the other deeds in aid of the suffering humanity he could undertake because he had some money. This problem confronted the reformers of Europe in the Middle Ages. The different sects, Catholics and Lutherans fought over property. It caused several wars. Moreover Rammohun felt that he could not render any good to his community by cutting himself off from the main body. Even at the present time Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who has stood forth to unite all the classes, Hindus and Muhammadans, has not been able to declare against caste. Rammohun had great courage about a century ago in urging the abolition of this system and but for legal difficulties he does not seem to have ever supported it in practice.

In a letter, dated January 18, 1828, he wrote to a friend :—

“I agree with you that in point of vices the Hindus are not worse than the generality of Christians in Europe and America ; but I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. . . . It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort.” Here his views are definite. He tells the disadvantages of the rigid caste system and desires a change in the political interests of the Hindus. The recent controversy over the distribution of seats in the legislature and the filling in of posts under the Government according to

a definite ratio ought to make people realise how India has suffered and is still suffering from the existence of a system which reason does not justify nor the sense of equity sanction. Rammohun's plea for a revision of the system should go home to the hearts of the patriotic Indians who are sacrificing so much for the emancipation of their country.

### **Rights of Women.**

The cause of women found in Rammohun Roy a great champion. He not only fought against the system of Sati but would have liked to extend the rights of women over property and to see them occupy an honoured position in society. The standard of civilization is measured by the part that women play in social life. Rammohun's study of the Smritis seems to have been very critical. He studied the laws of the Hindus and found that there had been a gradual degradation of women. In his tracts on the custom of Sati he made it clear that the selfish motives of the male relatives were the cause of that inhuman practice. He made a noble appeal in defence of the rights of women. He published in 1822 another tract entitled "Brief Remarks regarding the Ancient Rights of Females." He showed that women used to receive equal share with men, according to such authorities. These rights were gradually reduced by the later law-givers. The earlier writers allowed the mother to inherit an equal share with her sons after the death of her husband. Some of them also allowed the step-mother equal share. But the author of the Dayabhaga and the modern writers laid down the rule that a father if willing to divide his property among his heirs can allot equal share to his wife who has no issue. If on the other hand no provision is made in the life-time of the father then a step-mother without an issue is not entitled to a share. A.

mother is not entitled to any share, and on the death of her husband she becomes dependent upon her son, and on the death of the son upon the grandson or daughter-in-law. The British courts of justice in India used to rely upon the interpretation of these laws by the Pandits who were rarely unanimous on any question. Consequently the judges took the more cautious view and left the widows to suffer. Their position has been thus described by Rammohun Roy who felt so much for them :

“The consequence is, that a woman who is looked up to as the sole mistress by the rest of a family one day, on the next, becomes dependent on her sons, and subject to the slights of her daughters-in-law. She is not authorized to expend the most trifling sum or dispose of an article of the least value, without the consent of her son or daughter-in-law, who were all subject to her authority but the day before. Cruel sons often wound the feelings of their dependent mothers, deciding in favour of their own wives, when family disputes take place between their mothers and wives. Step-mothers, who often are numerous on account of polygamy being allowed in these countries, are still more shamefully neglected in general by their step-sons, and sometimes dreadfully treated by their sisters-in-law who have fortunately a son or sons by their husband.”

How penetrating was the observation by Rammohun and how deeply sympathetic was he for the suffering women of Bengal ! He felt that the desire to commit suicide by women was so strong on account of this system. Women have practically no protection in the law courts. The public opinion in Bengal was not in their favour, and the Pandits were divided in their opinion. The ancient authorities also allowed to a daughter one-fourth part of property inherited by a son. But this was also denied by the Dayabhaga. Unmarried daughters or widows were therefore reduced to the same position of dependence.



The misery of women has been accentuated by the practice of polygamy, and the non-existence of the system of widow-marriage. The unfortunate widows have therefore three courses left to them: "First, To live a miserable life as entire slaves to others, without indulging any hope of support from another husband. Secondly, To walk in the paths of unrighteousness for their maintenance and independence. Thirdly, To die on the funeral pile of their husbands, loaded with the applause and honour of their neighbours."

The last course we have already discussed in the proper place. That this deplorable mode of ending useful careers does not exist now is due mainly to the efforts of Rammohun Roy. He did not definitely suggest that widows should be re-married but it seems he would have liked very much the introduction of such a system. The language he used indicates that re-marriage would have been a more desirable course than living as a dependent or ending the life in misery or vice. His hands were too full to ask for such a reform at that stage. Knowing the feelings of the people he pressed for the more urgent reforms.

Till the middle of the nineteenth century one of the evils in Bengal was the practice of polygamy, specially in the higher strata of society. The conscience of the educated people was awakened by the writings of Rammohun Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and other eminent people. But at the time of Rammohun the condition of society was very miserable. Rammohun was married to three wives while he was a mere boy. One of his wives died very early, and on her death he was married to two other girls. He had therefore some experience of the evils of polygamy and wrote very bitterly against the practice. He thus wrote in the same tract: "These restraints on female inheritance encourage, in a great degree, polygamy, a frequent source of the greatest misery in native families; a grand object of

Hindus being to secure a provision for their male offspring, the law, which relieves them from the necessity of giving an equal portion to their wives, removes a principal restraint on the indulgence of their inclinations in respect to the number they marry. Some of them, especially Brahmans of higher birth, marry ten, twenty or thirty women, either for some small consideration, or merely to gratify their brutal inclinations, leaving a great many of them, both during their life-time and after their death, to the mercy of their own paternal relations. The evil consequences arising from such polygamy, the public may easily guess, from the nature of the fact itself, without my being reduced to the mortification of particularising those which are known by the native public to be of daily occurrence." The horrible polygamy among Brahmans, says Rammohun, is directly contrary to law given by ancient authors. The marriage of a second wife is allowed only in a few specified cases. As in the case of burning of widows he says: "Had a Magistrate or other public officer been authorised by the rulers of the empire to receive applications for his sanction to a second marriage during the life of a first wife, and to grant his consent only on such accusations as the foregoing being substantiated, the above Law would have been rendered effectual, and the distress of the female sex in Bengal, and the number of suicides, would have been necessarily very much reduced." In spite of the progress made by the educated people the abolition of polygamy is still a desideratum in India. Rammohun, as in other cases, suggested adherence to the rules sanctioned by the ancient laws, but even then he received very little support from his countrymen. They would not allow the British courts to interfere in their religious matters. The agitation against all healthy social reforms is still carried on with bitterness.

Another evil that Rammohun pointed out has not received sufficient attention. The misery of the widows

leads them to commit vice. The social evil exists in all parts of India. The cities are filled by unfortunate women who have been degraded by depraved men who after satisfying their lust leave their victims to the mercies of equally criminal persons like themselves. The spirit of Rammohun calls for the redemption of these unfortunate women, and he would have struck at the root of the whole problem, by restoring women to their rightful position in society. Their legal status as the inheritor of property should be assured. The modern reformers are not very enthusiastic about this item of social reformation. If a country wants to rise high in the estimation of the world then its first duty is to restore to women her position of equality with men in all matters. As the maker of Modern India Rammohun was fully conscious of this necessity. Like the bold navigator he made a full and comprehensive survey of the vast ocean lying before him and he is now calling his countrymen to link up the points in the chart he prepared with so much care.

### **Plea for the freedom of the Press.**

We have already referred to the Memorial that Rammohun drew up for presentation to the Supreme Court regarding the Press Ordinance promulgated by the Government under the guidance of Mr. Adam, and the Petition to the King-in-Council. These two documents give us an idea of the people in respect of their political rights, and how Rammohun tried to stimulate in his countrymen the desire to demand their political rights. Indians brought up in the atmosphere of submission could hardly think aloud of their grievances and give them a literary shape. The newspapers which Rammohun started awakened the consciousness of the people to their elementary rights. In his letter to Lord Amherst he urged a better system of education by which the minds of the Indians would be

illuminated by scientific knowledge. He knew most of the people did not think rightly in these important matters, and when public opinion was not properly organised he ventured to ask in the name of his countrymen what he considered to be in their interest. "The light breaks in upon us across the vista of years from him," said Surendranath Banerjea, "who in this, as in other matters has been to us the source of our illumination and of inspiration. For let it be remembered that Rammohun Roy was not only the founder of the Brahma Samaj and the pioneer of all social reform in Bengal, but he was the father of constitutional agitation in India. . . . It is remarkable how he anticipated us in some of the great political problems which are the problems of to-day, of which one at least remains unsolved."

It will pay us to study closely the two documents, which have been described by the late N. N. Ghose as remarkable productions: "For cogency of argument, accuracy of fact, and appreciation of principle, they could not be surpassed. No writer at the present day could put the case for liberty more effectively than the Raja has done. Space will not permit the making of any extracts, specially where a selection is difficult from among paragraphs almost every one of which is a gem rich and rare." In these documents he showed the condition of things before the arrival of the British, the change in outlook since their arrival, the attitude of the Indians towards the British people, the type of men entrusted with the executive administration of the country, and the necessity of keeping the higher authorities informed of the feelings of the people. In the first paragraph of the Petition he described the King as "the guardian of our lives, property and religion," and struck the right note when he said: "when our rights are invaded and our prayers disregarded by the subordinate authorities, we beg leave to carry our com-

plaints before your Majesty's throne, which is happily established in mercy and justice, amidst a generous people celebrated throughout the earth as the enemies of tyranny, and distinguished under your royal auspices, as the successful defenders of Europe from Continental usurpation." He expected fair treatment from a people who were jealous of their own liberty and who have fought strenuously for the restoration of liberty of Europe from the tyranny of Napoleon and other autocratic rulers. This is an appeal to the sympathetic heart of a free nation.

The measure against which the Petition was being sent has been characterised as an act of executive tyranny. "The local executive authorities having suddenly assumed the power of legislation in matters of the highest moment," went on the petition, "and abolished legal privileges of long standing without the least pretence that we have ever abused them, and made an invasion on our civil rights and privileges of your Majesty's faithful subjects, or in intention to encourage a cruel and unfounded suspicion of our attachment to the existing Government." The nature of the complaint is thus put in clear language. The people of Bengal who were noted for their timidity were asked to stand upon their own rights and not to submit to the petty tyrannies of the local officers who had a higher authority over them to supervise their activities.

The arguments in the Memorial to the Supreme Court were made very incisive. It concluded with the following telling passages:

"After this Rule and Ordinance shall have been carried into execution, your Memorialists are therefore extremely sorry to observe, that a complete stop will be put to the diffusion of knowledge and the consequent mental improvement now going on, either by translation into the popular dialect of this country from the

learned languages of the East, or by the circulation of literary intelligence drawn from foreign publications. And the same cause will prevent those Natives who are better versed in the laws and customs of the British Nation, from communicating to their fellow-subjects a knowledge of the admirable system of Government established by the British, and the peculiar excellencies of the means they have adopted for the strict and impartial administration of justice. Another evil of equal importance in the eyes of a just Ruler, is, that it will also preclude the Natives from making the Government readily acquainted with the errors and injustice that may be committed by its executive officers in the various parts of this extensive country ; and it will also preclude the Natives from communicating frankly and honestly to their Gracious Sovereign in England and his Council, the real condition of his Majesty's faithful subjects in this distant part of his dominions and the treatment they experience from the local Government; since such information cannot in future be conveyed to England, as it has heretofore been, either by the translations from the Native publications inserted in the English newspapers printed here and sent to Europe, or by the English publications which the Natives themselves had in contemplation to establish, before this Rule and Ordinance was proposed.

"After this sudden deprivation of one of the most precious of their rights, which had been freely allowed them since the establishment of the British power, a right which they are not, and cannot be charged with having ever abused, the inhabitants of Calcutta would be no longer justified in boasting, that they are fortunately placed by Providence under the protection of the whole British Nation, or that the King of England and his Lords and Commons are their Legislators, and that they are secured in the enjoyment of the same civil

and religious privileges that every Briton is entitled to in England.

"Your Memorialists are persuaded that the British Government is not disposed to adopt the political maxim so often acted upon by Asiatic Princes, that the more a people are kept in darkness, their Rulers will derive the greater advantages from them ; since, by reference to History, it is found that this was but a short-sighted policy which did not ultimately answer the purpose of its authors. On the contrary, it rather proved disadvantageous to them ; for we find that as often as an ignorant people, when an opportunity offered, have revolted against their Rulers, all sorts of barbarous excesses and cruelties have been the consequence ; whereas a people naturally disposed to peace and ease, when placed under a good Government from which they experience just and liberal treatment, must become the more attached to it, in proportion as they become more enlightened and the great body of the people are taught to appreciate the value of the blessings they enjoy under its Rule.

"Every good Ruler, who is convinced of the imperfection of human nature, and reverence the Eternal Governor of the world, must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire ; and therefore he will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestrained Liberty of Publication, is the only effectual means that can be employed."

The claim to the enjoyment of civil and religious rights could not be put in more forceful language. Here we find appeal to noble sentiments and at the same time warning to the Government in case they persist in flouting the just demands of the people. Rammohun asked for the Indians the same civic and political pri-

privileges as enjoyed by his Majesty's subjects in Britain. These points were put in more expressive language in the petition to the King. A comparison was made between the Muhammadan Government and the Christian British Government, and he stated that the people preferred the British Government because they expected under the British the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty. The passage is worth quoting in this place:

"Your Majesty is aware, that under their former Muhammadan Rulers, the natives of this country enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussulmans, being eligible to the highest offices in the state, entrusted with the command of armies and the government of provinces and often chosen as advisers to their Prince, without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth. They used to receive free grants of land exempted from any payments of revenue, and besides the highest salaries allowed under the Government, they enjoyed free of charge, large tracts of country attached to certain offices of trust and dignity, while natives of learning and talent were rewarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument. Although under the British rule, the natives of India, have entirely lost this political consequence, your Majesty's faithful subjects were consoled by the more secure enjoyment of those civil and religious rights which had been so often violated by the rapacity and intolerance of the Mussalmans ; and notwithstanding the loss of political rank and power, they considered themselves much happier in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty than were their ancestors ; but if these rights that remain are allowed to be unceremoniously invaded, the most valuable of them being placed at the mercy of one or two individuals, the basis on which



they have founded their hopes of comfort and happiness under the British power, will be destroyed."

The petition discussed point by point all the objections which could be put forward against the grant of full liberty to the Press and finally made a passionate appeal to the King:

"Your Majesty's faithful subjects from the distance of almost half the globe, appeal to your Majesty's heart by the sympathy which forms a paternal tie between you and the lowest of your subjects, not to overlook their condition ; they appeal to you by the honour of that great nation which under your Royal auspices has obtained the glorious title of Liberator of Europe, not to permit the possibility of millions of your subjects being wantonly trampled on and oppressed ; they lastly appeal to you by the glory of your Crown on which the eyes of the world are fixed, not to consign the natives of India, to perpetual oppression and degradation."

This appeal was rejected by the Privy Council, and it was not till Sir Charles Metcalfe with uncommon boldness repealed the oppressive Ordinance that the Press in India enjoyed any freedom. This act on the part of Sir Charles cost him his position in India. But his name is associated with that of Rammohun Roy as the Liberator of the Press. At the "Free Press Dinner" given to Sir Charles Metcalfe at the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 9th February, 1838, the name of Rammohun Roy was not forgot. A toast was proposed to "the memory of Rammohun Roy," by an Englishman named Mr. Leith and it was seconded by Prasanna Coomar Tagore who was associated with Rammohun in this agitation and other noble causes. In referring to the petition Miss Collet writes in her *Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* :

"The appeal is one of the noblest pieces of English to which Rammohun put his hand. Its stately periods

and not less stately thought recall the eloquence of the great orators of a century ago. In language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British History." Reading the documents now we are struck at the way the cause of liberty was fought by this solitary individual when his countrymen had hardly learned the elementary principles of civic rights. He awakened in them a new consciousness of their rights and privileges as against the Rulers, and at the same time gave them a precious advice to set their house in order.

### **Vexatious Litigation.**

Rammohun was not allowed to carry on his benevolent and religious duties undisturbed. We have already referred to his differences with his parents early in life. On the death of his father and elder brother the property passed on to his nephew Govindaprosad. His advocacy of the worship of one God as against the idolatry of the common people, and his campaign against the Sati roused up the feelings of the orthodox who tried their best to harass him. At the instigation of some of these persons Govindaprosad instituted an accounts suit against him in the Equity Division of the Supreme Court claiming a share in the Taluks of Rameswarpur and Govindapur. On account of this litigation Rammohun got so much involved that he had to suspend the meetings of the Atmiya Sabha for two years. It is gathered from the records of the Board of Revenue in 1818 that the property left by Jagomohun Roy was in dispute. Govindaprosad later on admitted his mistake and in a letter to Rammohun prayed for his forgiveness. But it seems the litigation dragged on for some time more. Mr. Digby in a letter to the

Board of Revenue on September 22, 1824, said that Govindaprosad lost the suit against his uncle and lost immense money in this litigation. It seems Rammohun managed to maintain his right to the property acquired by himself.

Shortly after the conclusion of the suit instituted by his nephew Rammohun was dragged into another case brought against him by the Raja of Burdwan who claimed Rs. 15,002 from him, on the basis of a bond given by his father on account of arrears of land revenue of Rs. 7,501. The amount was due in 1797, but the claim was put forward in 1823. It is generally believed that this was also a case to embarrass Rammohun. It dragged on for several years. After eight years' contest in the Provincial Court of Calcutta the claim was dismissed, but the Burdwan Raj preferred an appeal before the Sadar Dewanee Adalat with no better results. The final decision was delivered on November 10, 1831. The Raja had a grudge against Rammohun because he had to pay a large amount of money to his widowed daughter-in-law whose case was fought by Rammohun's son-in-law who had served as Dewan to the deceased son of the Raja. The suit was a great drain upon Rammohun's money and energy. But he succeeded in defeating the Burdwan Raj. He denied his liability on the ground that he did not inherit any property of his father and so he could not be held liable for his debts. The claim was not put forth in the life-time of his father, and moreover it was barred by limitation as the money was overdue for more than twelve years.

Another case that caused much anxiety to Rammohun was the trouble in which his eldest son, Radhaprosad, was involved. This son was an officer in the collectorate at Burdwan. A charge of embezzlement of public money was brought against him. It was a false case, and the young man was prosecuted on

account of the negligence of his superior officer and the jealousy of his fellow-servants. This case caused Rammohun so much worry that he stopped correspondence with his friends and had to deny himself many other pleasures. Radhaprosad was honourably acquitted by the Circuit Court in February, 1826. The case was carried to the Sadar Nizamat Adalat, but the result was quite satisfactory to the young man. A great burden was removed from the shoulders of Rammohun and he could give his time and energy to the service of the community and the country.

Colonel Young in a letter from Calcutta dated September 30, 1828, gives a different colour to this campaign of law-suits. He writes:

"His whole time almost has been occupied for the last two years in defending himself and his son against a bitter and vindictive persecution which has been got up against the latter nominally, but against himself and his abhorred free opinions in reality—by a conspiracy of his own bigoted countrymen, protected and encouraged, not to say instigated, by some of ours—influential and official men who cannot endure that a presumptuous "black" should tread so closely upon the heels of the dominant white class, or rather should *pass* them in the march of mind. Rammohun Roy, after an arduous and prolonged battle through gradations of tribunals, has at length by dint of talent, perseverance, right, got the better in the last resort ; but the strife and the magnitude of the stake and the long despairs of justice have shattered his nerves and bodily health and his energies of mind. It is now over, and I hope most fervently that he will recover himself again. Not only he has no *equal* here among his countrymen, but he has none that at all approach to equality, even among the little "sacred squadron" of disciples whom he is slowly and gradually gathering around him in despite of obstacles. . . . But he perseveres, and does make a

distinct and visible progress, slow as it is—very slow. It must increase in geometrical ratio if he is only spared long enough to organise the elements he is gathering together of resistance to superstition and fanaticism."

This letter shows that there was something like a conspiracy against him and that some of the white officials were associated with it. Colonel Young therefore wrote: "It is strange that such a man should be looked upon coldly, not to say disliked by the mass of Europeans,—for he is greatly attached to us and our *regime*. Not that he loves our churches, or priests, or lawyers, or politicians, but because he considers the contact of our superior race with his degraded and inferior countrymen as the only means and chance they have of improving themselves in knowledge and energy."

A century after the death of Rammohun we find the conspiracy still continues against his memory. The records of the law-suits have been unearthed and the charges against Rammohun revived in spite of the findings of the competent tribunals to the contrary. These charges were repudiated by Rammohun and he was supported by the judges. But such is the spirit of some of our people that they are not happy unless they can blacken the memory of a great man, however valuable may be his services rendered to the country. Govindaprosad Roy withdrew the case against his uncle as false and he admitted that it was instituted at the instigation of others. It was through the good offices of Rammohun that he obtained an appointment under the Company and he always remained grateful to him for his kindness. But the critics would not be satisfied with the disclaimer of Govindaprosad. They would insist upon saying that the case was withdrawn under pressure. It is therefore necessary to examine a bit closely the points at issue. Before we attempt to refute the charges let us form an idea

of the relations between Rammohun and his parents and brothers. Rammohun had lost the favour of his parents on account of his liberal religious views. His father once threatened him that he would be disinherited from his property. But his natural affections prevailed. Although he did not feel quite happy at the theistic inclinations of Rammohun he allowed him to go his own way. Rammohun at this time was trying to get some living for himself. He made some money by giving advice to the rich people and carrying on the business of money-lending. As he belonged to a respectable family he could easily get himself in touch with other respectable people. It seems he lived most of his time outside his village, and possibly he spent some part of this time at Benares, Patna or Calcutta. The affairs of the family were not going on very smoothly. Ramkanta Roy therefore partitioned his property amongst his three sons, Jagomohun, Rammohun and Ramlochan. He kept to himself the estate of Bhoorsoot which he had taken on *ijara* for nine years (1791—1800), a house at Burdwan and some more property which he had acquired by his own earning. Jagomohun was given the Taluk of Harirampur—but the rest of the property were distributed equally amongst the three sons. The homestead at Langulpara was divided between Jagomohun and Rammohun, and the share of Radhanagar went to Ramlochan who removed there with his mother Rammani Devi. Tarini Devi remained in charge of the families of her two sons Jagomohun and Rammohun. The accounts of the two brothers were kept separate although they lived jointly. Ramkanta left the village and went to live at Burdwan. Rammohun also went to Calcutta and then moved about from place to place although he used to come to his village very often. He did not cut off his connection with his father altogether. The old man was assisted by his sons in looking after his estate at

Bhoorsoot. There was separation of property between the father and the sons. That Jagomohun was favoured by the father before the partition is clear from the fact that the Pergana of Chetwa, in the district of Midnapore, was purchased in his name in 1794, and the *ijara* of Bhoorsoot was taken on the security of Jagomohun. Even after partition an important estate was kept exclusively for him. The partition deed was executed on the 1st of December, 1796, and the three brothers agreed to this arrangement. The separation in property was made complete. The property included some gifts made by the maternal grandfathers of the three brothers, and they fell to the share of the respective grandsons, and the property acquired by Tarini Devi and Rammani Devi were allotted to them. From the schedule of property it appears that the share of Rammohun was not very paying.

After the partition Rammohun purchased two Taluks from Gangadhar Ghose and Ramtanu Roy by paying Rs. 3,100 and Rs. 1,250. The Taluk of Govindapur was in the Pergana of Jehanabad, and the other Rameswarpur was in the Pergana of Chandrakona. These two estates were assessed at Rs. 21,868-12-9 and yielded an income of about Rs. 5,000. This was a valuable acquisition and Rammohun did not like that these estates should in any way merge in the common property of the family. He, therefore, kept them in the name of his nephew Gooroodas Mukherjee. He gave it out at the time (1799) that as he had no issue, in case of his dying abroad, his nephew might inherit this property without dispute. Gooroodas, on the other hand, stated that the transaction was effected for better management. It is quite clear that Rammohun did not like its income to be appropriated for other purposes and he had to arrange for its disposal in case of his death. Another important source of income of Rammohun was lending money to the Europeans. The

civilians used to come to him for money and the Hon'ble Andrew Ramsay, Thomas Woodford and John Digby borrowed money from him.

While Rammohun was in a position to manage his own way his father and brother were in troubles over the collections of their estates. Ramkanta could not pay the revenue either to the Government or to the Burdwan Raj. The *ijara* of Bhoorsoot expired in 1800. The Government claimed from him Rs. 3,338 as arrears of revenue. On failing to pay the amount in time his person was seized and he was confined in the civil jail at Hughly. He was released when the dues were paid in October, 1801. He was again arrested on the complaint of the Burdwan Raj, and was first confined at the Hughly jail and then at Burdwan. Jagomohun also suffered the same fate for his failure to pay the Government dues and was confined in the civil jail at Midnapore. Rammohun was away at this time. He went to Benares, Patna and Calcutta and had very little connection with the family. He was seeking his own fortune abroad. At this time he maintained a small establishment at Calcutta for carrying on business. For a short time he accepted service under Mr. Thomas Woodford at Dacca Jelalpore. But on that gentleman going on leave in May, 1803 Rammohun left the service and came to see his father who was in his deathbed at Burdwan. According to the version of William Adam Rammohun was present at the time of his father's death. But Mr. Brajendranath Banerjee thinks by referring to the evidence in a law-suit that he was then away. One thing, however, is clear that Rammohun performed the Shraddha ceremony at Calcutta, Jagomohun at Midnapore jail, and Ramlochan at Langulpara under the direction of Tarini Devi. This suggests that the cleavage between Rammohun and his mother was still very acute. Jagomohun was released from the jail in 1805.



Rammohun advanced some money to his brother as loan for paying off his debts.

After the death of his father Rammohun went to Murshidabad and then he joined John Digby who was attracted by his character and scholarship, and was also under obligation to him for occasional financial help. He accepted service under him at Jessore, Ramgurn, Bhagalpur and Rungpur. While Rammohun was at Rungpur his brother Jagomohun died in 1811. After Ramkanta Jagomohun was the head of the family and on his death Rammohun ought to have been the head ; but Tarini Devi was strongly opposed to him, and she managed the estate on behalf of her grandson. Govindaprosad was not very competent to manage the estate and the family dwelling house was once put up to auction for arrears of revenue. It seems Rammohun saved the situation, but he did not disturb the arrangements under Tarini Devi.

Jagomohun actually inherited what was left by his father. There was a decree in favour of Ramkanta, and on his death Jagomohun withdrew that money amounting to about two to three thousands. Ramkanta also had taken on *ijara* another estate before his death. Rammohun had nothing to do with these things. He managed his own estates separately and his mother would not allow him to participate in the family affairs. Rammohun had to stay out and subsequently he had to remove to the village of Raghunathpore. By strenuous exertions he made a position for himself, and when he came to settle in Calcutta he was known as a well-to-do person. He carried on his mission to spread the knowledge of God by distributing literature on Vedanta and holding discussion. Evidently it became intolerable to his orthodox relatives, at whose instigation Govindaprosad instituted a suit against him in the Equity Division of the Supreme Court in 1817 claiming that the estates of Rameswarpur and

Govindapur belonged to the joint family on the plea that they were purchased with money advanced by Ramkanta. He also further asserted that some of the financial transactions carried on by Rammohun were actually done with the money of Ramkanta. Rammohun denied these statements and he took up his stand on the ground that in his business and monetary transactions his father had no share. Govindaprosad had to admit that he instituted the case at the instigation of others. The records of the case prove the position of Rammohun definitely. It is rather unfortunate that there should be people at this time to maintain the accusation of Govindaprosad in spite of facts to the contrary.

Another case was instituted by Maharaja Tejchandra of Burdwan against Rammohun and Govindaprosad in 1823 to recover some money which Ramkanta Roy had agreed to pay by a kistibund by the 28th September, 1797. This was not any money borrowed from the Maharaja. Ramkanta had taken two *perganas* on *ijara* for the collection of revenue. The demands of these two taluks of Balia and Bagdi were excessive and Ramkanta failed to pay the full amount. He was therefore compelled to execute a bond that he would pay the balance within a year. Ramkanta did not pay this money nor the Burdwan Raj pressed for payment. It seems it was considered as bad debt. The judge of the Provincial Court after carefully examining all the documents submitted in the case held that the plaintiff could not produce any proof that Ramkanta was ever asked to pay the debt in his life time. The witnesses who came to prove that Jagomohun and then Govindaprosad were asked to pay were not reliable and there was no claim preferred against Rammohun Roy within twenty-seven years. No payment had been demanded since 1809, and therefore the claim was barred by limitation. One of the arguments in defence of

Rammohun was that as he did not inherit any property left by his father, and as on account of his difference with him on religious matters he lived apart from him in his life time no claim could lie against him. He further stated that the son was responsible for the debt of his father if he inherited his property. But if in the life time of the father the son became separated from his father, and earned his own livelihood and did not inherit any property left by his father then he could not be accountable for any of his debts, either according to law or equity. The court exonerated him from all liabilities, and the decision was upheld by the Sadar Dewani Adalat. Mr. Brajendranath Banerjea has accused Rammohun of ingratitude to his father for making this statement. Such a charge against Rammohun is hardly fair. We have seen from the facts discovered by Mr. Banerjea that every word of Rammohun was substantially true. It was a claim put forward by the Burdwan Raj with a view to harass him, and there was no genuine desire to recover the money. We, therefore, fail to understand how Rammohun could be guilty of ingratitude. Rammohun was quite frank in his statement. There was no prevarication in it and he did not take his defence behind mere technicality. He was not included in the suit first instituted by the Burdwan Raj, as it was known to them that he could not be held responsible for his father's debt. Rammohun's statement was made with reference to a particular issue, and the property he received in the life time of his father could not legally be called inheritance as it was mainly ancestral property and what was acquired by his father he kept for himself, and Jagomohun inherited his property. Rammohun never said that he was deprived of any share in the ancestral property, but what he asserted was that his main property was acquired by himself, and the ancestral property which was under the management of his mother

was subsequently rescued by him, and consequently his position was very definite.

### **The Tribune of New India.**

Rammohun's sense of national self-respect was very great. He would resent any measure that would place his countrymen in a position of inferiority. A Jury Act was passed early in 1827. This measure introduced religious distinctions into the judicial system of this country. The Hindus and Mussalmans could not sit on the jury when a Christian was being prosecuted, and in trials of either Hindus or Mussalmans they could not sit on the grand jury. The Christians, Indian or European, were placed in a position of superiority. This invidious distinction created bitterness in the minds of the parties affected. A petition was drawn up to be presented to both Houses of Parliament. It was largely signed by Hindus and Mussalmans, and forwarded to Mr. J. Crawford for taking it to Parliament. In a memorable letter to Mr. Crawford Rammohun put the case of the Indians. In this letter he gave expression to the aspirations of Indians to be free by coming in contact with the British people. The domination of India by the Britons could not be a permanent thing. The vision of a New India dawned upon him at that time. He wrote to Mr. Crawford:

"Supposing some 100 years hence the native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirements of general and political knowledge as well as modern arts and sciences is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may

suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British Empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy.

"In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge."

That India could become an ally of the Empire was envisaged by Rammohun and students of modern history have seen how India has stood by the Empire in the hours of her crises. The educated Indians have become conscious of their rights as citizens of a self-governing polity and if the Britishers still refuse them their just rights they might become their determined enemy. These ideas were clearly ventilated in the Round Table Conference in London. How true was the prophecy of Rammohun the Tribune of Modern India? The British statesmen have gradually extended the political privileges of the Indians, and have promised them full Dominion Status. The Indians, on the other hand, have claimed *Purna Swaraj*, that is, complete freedom in their own affairs. The anticipations of Rammohun have come about. "The prospect of an educated India, of an India approximating to European standards of culture," says Miss Collet, "seems to have

never been long absent from Rammohun's mind ; and he did, however vaguely, claim in advance for his countrymen the political rights which progress in civilization inevitably involves. Here again Rammohun stands forth as the tribune and prophet of the New India."

The petition to Parliament against the Jury Act was presented to the House of Commons on June 5, 1829, by Mr. Wynn, who was the author of the Act as President of the Board of Control. Lord Ashley, then a member of the Board of Control, promised on behalf of the Government to direct its attention to this question. He handsomely "acknowledged the advantages which had been derived from admitting the natives of India to take a part in the administration of justice." It must be said to the credit of the British Government that they have admitted the Indians to all the judicial appointments, in India or in England. There are Indians who are serving as Chief Justice of High Courts, and as Members of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Indians have also been placed on a footing of equality with Europeans while serving on the jury.

### **European Settlers in India.**

Rammohun was anxious to promote the welfare of the Indians in all possible ways. He desired the progress of his countrymen by coming in contact with the more progressive people of the West. There are some who hold that India should be removed from all contact with the Europeans. They would not allow the foreigners to have anything to do here. But Rammohun was liberal enough to think that India would gain by the services of a better type of Europeans. In some districts of Bengal an attempt was being made by a number of Europeans to cultivate indigo. There were many complaints against

these indigo planters. Interested parties did not like the exploitation of the soil by the capitalists from other lands. The planters used to advance money to the ryots and got indigo at a fixed price when it was ready. The ryots might have suffered on account of this forward business as they could not sell their goods in the open market. But against the better class of the planters the ryots had nothing to complain. These planters had reclaimed the waste lands and gave the cultivators a better salary than they could obtain from the landlords. The cultivators were very often victims of money-lenders and hard-hearted Zamindars. Rammohun made certain enquiries regarding the condition of the ryots in the indigo plantations and wrote to Mr. Nathaniel Alexander in reply to the latter's questions :

“The advances made to ryots by the indigo planters have increased in most factories in consequence of the price of indigo having risen, and in many, better prices than formerly are allowed for the plant. . . . I am positively of opinion that upon the whole the indigo planters have done more essential good to the natives of Bengal than any other class of persons. This is a fact which I will not hesitate to affirm whenever I may be questioned on the subject either in India or in Europe. I at the same time must confess that there are individuals of that class of society who either from hasty disposition or want of due discretion have proved obnoxious to those who expected milder treatment from them. But, my dear sir, you are well aware that no general good can be effected without some partial evil, and in this instance I am happy to say that the former greatly preponderates over the latter. If any class of the natives “would gladly see them all turned out of the country,” it would be the zemindars in general, since in many instances the planters have successfully protected the ryots against the tyranny and oppression of their landlords.”

Rammohun's views on this point were not shared by many Indians in those days. But that his hopes were not misplaced is proved by the progress made in agriculture. "Indeed, Indian agriculture" writes Mr. N. G. Mukerji in his *Hand-book of Indian Agriculture* : "has been actually vastly improved by our contact with the West. European planters have been the means of introducing important innovations. In the most out of the way places of India we find European planters carrying on agricultural experiments and improvements imperceptibly and noiselessly."

This opinion Rammohun confirmed in a speech at the Town Hall of Calcutta in a public meeting held on the 15th of December, 1829. It was convened to consider the situation when the term of the Charter of the East India Company would expire. A petition was drafted to be presented to Parliament according to the resolutions passed in that meeting. The meeting urged the abolition of the rights of the Company to carry on trade in India, the removal of a higher rate of duties upon the exports from India to Britain, and of the restrictions against the settlement of Europeans in India. Rammohun supported the resolution on the last subject. In course of his speech he said :

"From personal experience, I am impressed with the conviction that the greater our intercourse with European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social, and political affairs ; a fact which can be easily proved by comparing the condition of those of my countrymen who have enjoyed the advantage with that of those who unfortunately have not had that opportunity ; and a fact which I could, to the best of my belief, declare on solemn oath before any assembly. As to the indigo planters, I beg to observe that I have travelled through several districts in Bengal and Behar, and I found the natives residing in the neighbourhood of indigo plantations evidently



better clothed and better conditioned than those who lived at a distance from such stations. There may be some partial injury done by the indigo planters ; but, on the whole, they have performed more good to the generality of the natives of this country than any other class of Europeans, whether in' or out of service." Rammohun's cosmopolitan sympathies saw nothing but good in the contact of different races in India. India has been the meeting place of many races and he felt that there would take place the evolution of a better nation by the fusion of races. It was impossible to keep India as the reserve of any nationality."

In a communication to the Select Committee of the House of Commons Rammohun Roy dealt with this more elaborately. He discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the settlement of Europeans in India. India would gain by the superior knowledge of the Europeans, their better social life and their acquaintance with a better form of government. They would help the Indians in breaking down the fetters of superstitions and prejudices, and co-operate with them in evolving a better system of government in India so that the Indians might successfully stand against all tyranny and oppression. By their closer contact the relations between India and England would improve, and "India may thus, for an unlimited period, enjoy union with England, and the advantage of her enlightened government ; and in return contribute to support the greatness of this country."

Rammohun was not blind to the fact that a different turn of events might bring about a separation between the two countries. But he would not be sorry for such an emergency. "If, however, events should occur to effect a separation between the two countries, then still the existence of a large body of respectable settlers (consisting of Europeans and their descendants, professing Christianity, and speaking the English language in

common with the bulk of the people, as well as possessed of superior knowledge, scientific, mechanical, and political) would bring that vast empire in the east" said Rammohun, "to a level with other large Christian countries in Europe, and by means of its immense riches and extensive population, and by the help which may be reasonably expected from Europe, they (the settlers and their descendants) may succeed sooner or later in enlightening and civilizing the surrounding nations of Asia." He was also conscious of the disadvantages of the contact between a more vigorous and a more docile people. But he suggested means of removing these disadvantages by providing some safeguards. He, however, did not desire the wholesale emigration of the Europeans. He wanted the educated and well-to-do Europeans to come and settle in India, and to avoid any risk an experiment might be made to observe the results. "On mature consideration, therefore, I think," said Rammohun, "I may safely recommend that educated persons of character and capital should now be permitted and encouraged to settle in India, without any restriction of locality or any liability to banishment, at the discretion of the government; and the result of this experiment may serve as a guide in any future legislation on this subject."

If on any account the two countries be separated still there would "a friendly and highly advantageous commercial intercourse be kept up between two free and Christian countries, united as then they will be by resemblance of language, religion and manners." Some concessions have been granted to European settlers in India but Indians are painfully aware how these Europeans, with a few honourable exceptions, hold themselves aloof from the people of this land. English education, instead of improving the relations has brought about a conflict of interests. The Europeans in India rarely identify themselves with Indians, and if

they concede the just rights of the Indians to a share in the administration of the country, they demand safeguards for themselves. This complicated question of race-contacts has baffled the efforts of many social thinkers.

### **The Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property.**

The law of inheritance is not uniform throughout India. There are different authorities for the different provinces and areas. In Bengal the rules followed are generally those laid down by Jimutavahan in the *Dayabhaga*, and in other parts of India are those in the *Mitākshara* as prescribed by Vijñaneswara. But the interpretation of law depended upon the learned Pandits. In some cases the law was interpreted by the rulings of the judicial authorities. According to the *Dayabhaga* a father could dispose of his ancestral property, either by sale or gift, without the consent of his sons and grandsons. But this custom was declared invalid by Sir Charles Grey, then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (1829-30). His ruling called forth a brilliant essay from the pen of Rammohun Roy who displayed great forensic skill in defending the practice of Bengal. This essay and that on the rights of females have been declared by eminent lawyers as very creditable to a man whose profession was not law. His essay "would do credit to any trained and professional lawyer deeply versed in the history of the Hindoo Law," said Mr. N. N. Ghose. Similar opinion was held by Sir Gooroodas Banerjee, an eminent Judge of the Calcutta High Court, who said at a memorial meeting of Rammohun :

"His two essays—one on the rights of the Hindoo females and the other on the rights of a Hindoo over ancestral property—show at once his deep erudition as a lawyer and his broad views as a jurist and it is to the

latter of these two essays that is due in no small measure the advanced state of the law relating to the free alienability of property in Bengal. The concluding paragraph of that essay is well worthy of Rammohun Roy, and will do honour to any lawyer or any jurist in the country. Every one who belongs to the profession to which I have the honour to belong, will perceive here the rudiments of that discussion, which in the writings of Sir Henry Maine, have shed such lustre over his name. And Rammohun was no professional lawyer." When the decision was given by Sir Charles Grey, Rammohun gave in his essay an illuminating history of the law of inheritance in Bengal and said in the course of the essay :

"We are at a loss how to reconcile the introduction of this arbitrary change in the law of inheritance with the principles of justice, with reason, or with regard for the future prosperity of the country :—it appears inconsistent with the principles of justice ; because a judge, although he is obliged to consult his own understanding, in interpreting the law in many dubious cases submitted to his decision, yet is required to observe strict adherence to the established law, where its language is clear. In every country, the rules determining the rights of succession to, and alienation of property, first originated either in the conventional choice of the people, or in the discretion of the highest authority, secular or spiritual ; and those rules have been subsequently established by the common usages of the country, and confirmed by judicial proceedings. The principles of the law as it exists in Bengal having been for ages familiar to the people, and alienation of landed property by sale, gift, mortgage, or succession having been for centuries conducted in reliance on the legality and perpetuity of the system, a sudden change in those most essential parts of those rules cannot but be severely felt by the community at large ; and alienations

being thus subjected to legal contests, the courts will be filled with suitors, and ruin must triumph over the welfare of a vast proportion of those who have their chief interest in landed property."

Rammohun based his arguments not only upon the old texts but upon the conventions and usages. In a characteristic passage of Brihaspati he found support of his views: "Let no one found conclusions on the mere words of Sastras: from investigations without reason, religious virtue is lost." He stands forth as the champion of Common Law. He maintained for Bengal its distinct position, not only in its language, manners and ceremonies but also in its system of law. In this matter he was upheld by the Privy Council. Subsequent to the publication of the essay the controversy was maintained in the columns of the Bengal *Hurkaru*. In this controversy Rammohun maintained his position with ability, and his last reply was written on board the vessel by which he went to England. The vast erudition that he showed in this matter entitled him to a high position not only among the leaders of modern India but as a great jurist.

### **Agitation against the Regulation about Rent-Free Land.**

The politically conscious Rammohun was always watchful of the interests of his countrymen. When Lord William Bentinck came out to India as Governor-General he was confronted by deficits in the exchequer. He tried all means to retrench expenditure and to increase revenue. One of the measures he adopted was to give instructions to examine the rights to enjoy rent-free lands in Bengal. The Regulation was a violation of the promise given by the previous Governors-General like Lord Cornwallis and Lord Hastings. Rammohun Roy felt this as an act of

executive tyranny. On behalf of the landholders of Bengal, Behar and Orissa he drew up a petition to the Government. The case was put in with all plausible arguments. In the Regulation XIX of 1793 a solemn assurance was given that the holders of rent-free lands would not be subjected to payment of revenue until their titles were declared invalid by a judicial decree. This assurance was modified by Lord Hastings, but even his Government guaranteed that no part of their property would be rendered liable to attachment without the decision of a higher and more adequate authority than a collector of land revenue, or could be subjected to forfeiture without a chance of redress from the established judicial courts and the regular courts of appeal. These assurances were withdrawn by the Regulation of 1828, which gave full authority to the collector to enquire into the title and to attach and assess the land. The powers given to the collector made him in one capacity as plaintiff and in another as final judicial authority. A special commissioner was appointed for a number of districts to hear appeals, but this gave hardly any relief to the aggrieved parties. The petition was rejected by the Government. But a staunch fighter as Rammohun was he carried the petition along with him to England. An appeal was made to the Court of Directors in the name of his attendant Ramrutton Mukherjee. But this met with no better result. The result of this attitude of the Government to increase its own income was a deep discontent in India, which contributed to the great upheaval in 1857. "At the present moment, if there is one cause more than another producing hatred and disaffection to the British Government in India" said William Adam, "it is this measure, against which Rammohun Roy, both in India and England, raised his powerful and warning voice on behalf of his countrymen whom he loved, and on behalf of the British Government to which he was

in heart attached, and for whose honour and stability he was sincerely concerned."

While in England Rammohun pressed for a better form of judicial and revenue administration, which we shall take up in a subsequent chapter. Rammohun worked hard to break the stupor of his countrymen and to rouse up their interests in social and political affairs. He started India on the road to self-expression and self-government, and held up before us the vision of a Free India.

## CHAPTER VIII

# FOUNDATION OF THE BRAHMA SAMAJ

### Monotheism in India.

Indian philosophy considered God as the supreme existence of life. Even in the ancient past the Rishis conceived of God as one invisible and eternal force guiding the destiny of the created beings. The Vedanta developed the theory of unity in a very elaborate form. But this philosophy was confined to the thoughtful and cultured classes. The masses could hardly rise to the realisation of this idea. They used to worship various objects, such as animals, trees, rivers or phenomena of nature, or deified human beings, their images or symbols. They could not feel that there was one univesal spirit running through all creation. Different deities were worshipped in different places, and many gods received the homage of the people. Men who could think rightly pierced through the veil and meditated upon the grandeur of the Supreme Being. From his boyhood Rammohun was convinced of the necessity of worshipping One True God. He suffered persecution for the sake of his conviction. He was driven out of home. But one supreme passion of his life was to dedicate himself to the service of God. Wherever he had been he carried there the message of the ancient Rishis and the devotees of the Supreme Deity in all parts of the world. In his talks and discussions he tried to spread the ideas he had imbibed. But this was not enough for him. The *Atmiya Sabha* which he established at Calcutta helped him in his work of enlightening the minds of his countrymen. He published the old writings which supported his views, and cooperated



with the Unitarian Christians in organising a congregation. But his spirit was not satisfied with these things. He not only wanted to restore the worship of one true God, but to bind mankind in one universal chain of brotherhood. The existing institutions did not come up to his ideal. He had his sympathies for everything good and noble. But what he wanted was the evolution of a universal faith which would embrace all races, all scriptures and all creeds.

A pamphlet was published in 1823, entitled "Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in the One True God." It bore the name of Prosunno Koomar Thakoor, but in fact it was the composition of Rammohun. In this tract we find the universal ideals developed:—

"Those who firmly believe on the authority of the Vedas, that 'God is ONE only without an equal,' and that 'He cannot be known either through the medium of language, thought, or vision: how can he be known except as existing, *the origin and support of the universe?*' and who endeavour to regulate their conduct by the following precept, 'He who is desirous of eternal happiness should regard another as he regards himself, and the happiness and misery of another as his own,' ought to manifest the warmest affection towards such of their own countrymen as maintain the same faith and practice, even although they have not all studied the Vedas for themselves, but have professed a belief in God only through an acquaintance with their general design. Many among the ten classes of Sannyasis, and all the followers of Guru Nanak, of Dadu, and of Kabir, as well as of Santa, &c., profess the religious sentiments above-mentioned. It is our unquestionable duty invariably to treat them as brethren. No doubt should be entertained of their future salvation, merely because they receive instructions, and practise their sacred music, in the vernacular

dialect. For Yajnavalkya, with a reference to those who cannot sing the Hymns of the Vedas, has said, 'The divine hymns *Rik*, *Gatha*, *Panika*, and *Dakshabihits* should be sung ; because by their constant use man attains supreme beatitude.' 'He who is skilled in playing on the lute (*vina*), who is intimately acquainted with the various tones and harmonies, and who is able to beat time in music, will enter without difficulty upon the road of salvation.' Again the *Siva Dharma* as quoted by Raghunandana, says, 'He is reputed a Guru who according to the capacity of his disciple instructs him in Sanskrit whether pure or corrupt, in the current language of the country, or by any other means.'

"Amongst foreigners, those Europeans who believe God to be in every sense ONE, and worship HIM ALONE in spirit, and who extend their benevolence to man as the highest service to God, should be regarded by us with affection, on the ground of the object of their worship being the same as ours. We should feel no reluctance to cooperate with them in religious matters, merely because they consider Jesus Christ as the Messenger of God and their Spiritual Teacher ; for oneness in the object of worship and sameness of religious practice should produce attachment between the worshippers.

"Amongst Europeans, those who believe Jesus Christ to be God himself, and conceive him to be possessed of a particular form, and maintain Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be one God, should not be treated in an unfriendly manner. On the contrary, we should act towards them in the same manner as we act towards those of our countrymen who without forming any external image, meditate upon Rama and other supposed incarnations, and believe in their unity.

"Again, those amongst Europeans who believing Jesus Christ to be the Supreme Being moreover construct various images of him, should not be hated.

On the contrary, it becomes us to act towards those Europeans in the same manner as we act towards such as believe Rama, &c., to be incarnations of God, and form external images of them. For the religious principle of the two last-named sects of foreigners are one and the same with those of the two similar sects among Hindoos, although they are clothed in a different garb.

“When any belonging to the second and third classes of Europeans endeavour to make converts of us, the believers in the only living and true God, even then we should feel no resentment towards them, but rather compassion, on account of their blindness to the errors into which they themselves have fallen: since it is almost impossible, as every day’s experience teaches us, for men, when possessed of wealth and power, to perceive their own defects.”

Here we find the main trend of thoughts of Rammohun towards all the living religions. He had goodwill towards all, hatred or resentment towards none. All believers in God were brothers to him. The last paragraph seems to have some history behind it. The Christians tried to make him a convert and he expresses here his feelings towards these zealots of their faith. He had nothing but compassion for them. The Christian missionaries had money and influence and so he suggests here that on account of their pride of wealth and power they could not appreciate the standpoint of others or detect their own weaknesses. We know from his relations with the Christians that he never failed to co-operate with them inspite of fundamental differences.

Rammohun was quite conscious of the weakness of human intellect. Although he maintained the worship of God in spirit as the highest mode he did not deny those with limited knowledge the mode which appealed to them. In a small tract published in 1825 on the “Different

Modes of Worship., he cited a passage from the *Bhagavata* with approbation: "Man shall worship me the Lord of the *Universe* by means of an image or any other form, during the intervals of leisure from the performance of ritual observances prescribed for the class to which he belongs, until he becomes conscious that I dwell in all beings." Man should realise God in every being, and till he comes across that consciousness it is permissible to him to worship by means of an image. He considered devotion in some form as better than living a godless life which creates a spirit of defiance against things good and noble. The Indian spirit of toleration Rammohun possessed in abundance, but at the same time he made all possible efforts to carry home to the people the necessity of worshipping One God. Belief in the unity could alone unify the nation and break the barriers between one nation and another.

"Rammohun belongs to the lineage of India's great seers" said Rabindranath Tagore, "who age after age have appeared in the arena of our history with the message of Eternal Man. India's special genius has been to acknowledge the divine in human affairs, to offer hospitality to all that is imperishable in human civilization, regardless of racial and national divergence. From the early dawn of history it has been India's privilege and also its problem, as a host, to harmonise the diverse elements of humanity which have inevitably been brought to our midst, to synthesize contrasting cultures in the light of a comprehensive ideal. The stupendous structure of our social system with its intricate arrangement of caste testifies to the vigorous attempt made at an early stage of human civilization to deal with the complexity of our problem, to relegate to every class of our peoples, however wide the cleavage between their levels of culture, a place in a cosmopolitan scheme of society. Rammohun's predecessors, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, and innumerable saints and seers of medieval India, carried on much

further India's great attempt to evolve a human adjustment of peoples and races ; they broke through barriers of social and religious exclusiveness and brought together India's different communities on the genuine basis of spiritual unity. Now that our outworn social usages are yielding rapidly to the stress of an urgent call of unity, when rigid enclosures of caste and creed can no more obstruct the freedom of our fellowship, when India's spiritual need of faith and concord between her different peoples has become imperative and seems to have aroused a new stir of consciousness throughout the land, we must not forget that this emancipation of our manhood has been made possible by the indomitable personality of the great unifier, Rammohun Roy. He paved the path for this reassertion of India's inmost truth of being, her belief in the equality of man in the love of the Supreme Person, who ever dwells in the hearts of all men and unites us in the bond of welfare."

In his Introduction to the *Isopanishad* Rammohun prayed that the conviction of the rationality of believing in and adoring the Supreme Being only might be produced in the minds of the Hindus along with a complete perception and practice of that grand and comprehensive moral principle—*Do unto others as ye would be done by*. He worked strenuously to produce this effect in the minds of his countrymen. He collaborated with Christians for developing the moral consciousness of the people. The Unitarian Committee which was served by Mr. Adam as minister had Christianity as its basis. But this did not create any enthusiasm in the minds of the disciples of Rammohun. Mr. Adam suggested the formation of a Hindu Unitarian Association working in co-operation with the Christian Unitarians. The friends of Rammohun had some sympathy for this idea, but it did not take any immediate shape. Rammohun in the meantime carried on his work of interpreting the best ideals of the Hindus and of the Christians. He reprinted

for circulation the principles of the Unitarian Faith and also gave a new interpretation to the *Gayatri*, the sacred *Mantra* of the Hindus. There are still many persons who recite that *Mantra* without knowing its meaning. Rammohun felt that this sacred text should be explained that the people might understand the meaning of their daily prayer. He brought out the plain meaning of the passage as : "We meditate on the cause of all, pervading all, and internally ruling all material objects, from the sun down to us and others." In one sweep of thought all the conceivable things are included. He quoted the interpretation given to it by Sir William Jones as in accordance with his views :

"What the sun and light are to the visible world, that are the *Supreme good and truth* to the intellectual and invisible universe ; and, as our corporeal eyes have a distinct perception of objects enlightened by the sun, thus our soul acquire certain knowledge, by meditating on the light of truth, which emanates from the Being of beings : that is the light by which alone our minds can be directed in the path to beatitude."

Hindu Theism was to Rammohun a broad and comprehensive thing and he thought that it could grow in depth by closer association with other faiths. This turn he gave to the Brahma Samaj.

### **Origin of the Brahma Samaj.**

The *Atmiya Sabha* or the Unitarian Committee did not fully express the grand ideals of Rammohun. The Unitarian Church did not flourish on the soil of India. Possibly the form in which the worship was conducted did not appeal to the imagination of the congregation. It is said that one day while Rammohun was returning from the Unitarian service his two young disciples Tarachand Chakravarti and Chandra Sekhar Dev who were with him in the same carriage gave expression to

their desire for a place of worship of their own. Their hearts were not fully satisfied by attending a foreign place of worship, where the style and form were not in keeping with their traditions. This chimed in with the feelings of Rammohun. He was contemplating the design of a new organisation where the ideals of the East could be developed in an organised form. He consulted his intimate friends such as Dwarkanath Tagore, Kalinath Munsî, Mathuranath Mullik and others. There seems to have been the working of the same spirit in the minds of all. At a meeting held at the house of Rammohun Roy it was decided to give shape to the idea and attempts were made to secure a place. First they thought of acquiring a place in Simla, in the central part of Calcutta, but that did not appear suitable. They were, however, not prepared to wait and started the work in a hired house on Chitpore Road. This house still stands as house No. 48 and it was then the property of Ramkamal Basu of Chandernagore. This house is associated with many new movements in Calcutta ; It was in this house that the Hindu College was accommodated for some time, and after the removal of the Brahma Samaj to its new site it was given over to Dr. Alexander Duff for starting his college and educational mission.

The work of the new Samaj started with due solemnity on Wednesday, the 20th of August, 1828 (Ehadra 6, 1750 Sakabda). Pandit Ramchandra Sarma (Vidyabagish) was the chief priest on the occasion. After reciting the sacred texts from various Hindu books he preached a sermon on the spiritual worship of God. It is believed that the sermon was written by Rammohun himself. The text of the discourse was, "God is one only without an equal, in whom abide all worlds and their inhabitants. Thus he who perceives the Supreme Spirit in all creatures, acquires perfect equanimity, and shall be absorbed into the highest essence, even into the Almighty." The purport of the sermon was that all

worship, whether of natural objects, images or divine persons was indirectly the worship of the Supreme ; but the most excellent form of worship was the direct adoration of God. The excellence of the direct form of worship was attested by the revealed scriptures and also approved of by reason and found useful by experience. The indirect worshippers very often quarrelled with each other over the views they respectively held, the direct worshipper had quarrel with none as he adored the One God who was the object of worship of all, whether directly or indirectly. The sermon was translated into English by Tarachand Chakravarti and distributed among the people.

A copy of the sermon was sent to Captain A. Froyer by Rammohun, and in forwarding it he referred to it as "Exhibiting the simplicity, comprehensiveness and tolerance which distinguish the religious belief and worship formerly adopted by one of the most ancient nations on earth and still adhered to by the more enlightened portion of their posterity."

The new society struck a deep chord of the Hindu mind from the very beginning. The thoughtful people came across an elevating atmosphere in which they breathed the incense of the ancient Rishis burnt with the modern catholicity of the rationalist worshippers. There was no mysteriousness about it, but the simple Vedic hymns, the exhortation of the minister in the language of the people and the edifying music carried the minds of the congregation to a higher level of devotion. The grandeur of this form of worship enraptured the Hindu mind. The congregation gradually swelled and the Brahma Sabha created a stir in Calcutta.

Although on the title page of the first sermon the name *Brahma Samaj* appears, the society was known as the Brahma Sabha. Tarachand Chakravarti became its first Secretary, and the service was held every week on Saturday evening. Mr. Adam thus described the order of



service in a letter to Dr. Tuckerman, dated January 22, 1829 :

“The service begins with two or three of the Pandits singing, or rather *chanting* in the cathedral style, some of the spiritual portions of the Ved, which are next explained in the vernacular dialect to the people by another Pandit. This is followed by a discourse in Bengali . . . and the whole is concluded by hymns both in Sanskrit and Bengali, sung with the voice and accompanied by instrumental music, which is also occasionally interposed between other parts of the service. The audience consists generally of from 50 to 60 individuals, several Pandits, a good many Brahmins, and all decent and attentive in their demeanour.”

Mr. Adam used to attend the service occasionally but he was not quite happy at Rammohun founding a new institution. The European friends of Rammohun also did not seem to have looked at the Brahma Samaj with sympathy. The form of service in the Brahma Samaj was purely monotheistic although Brahmans were employed for the recital of Vedic texts and for expounding the moral teaching of the new religion. The services of two Telegu Brahmans were secured for reciting Vedic hymns, Pandit Utsavananda Vidyabagish delivered sermons in Bengali. Two brothers, named Kista and Bistu used to sing hymns mostly composed by Rammohun himself. Along with them there was a Muhammadan named Gholam Abbas who helped the choir with instrumental music. Sometimes Muhammadan and Eurasian boys were brought in for giving Persian and English hymns. From the very beginning Rammohun seems to have organised a cosmopolitan group ; there were Hindus, Muhammadans and Christians. This did not satisfy the Christians. The *John Bull* of Calcutta sarcastically remarked that Rammohun had very naturally slid from Unitarianism into Deism. It also did not like the two

Telegu Brahmans reciting the Vedic hymns from a separate chamber. Mr. Adam himself wrote to a friend :

“Rammohun Roy, I am persuaded, supports this institution, not because he believes in the divine authority of the Ved, but solely as an instrument for overthrowing idolatry. To be candid, however, I must add that the conviction has lately gained ground in my mind that he employs Unitarian Christianity in the same way, as an instrument for spreading pure and just notions of God, without believing in the divine authority of the Gospel.”

This is nothing extraordinary. Rammohun's chief aim was to found his faith upon reason, and he made the Brahma Samaj the expression of this idea of reconciliation. “This was a tremendous step ahead of the religious thought of the world” says a Christian writer. The new institution found a congenial soil and flourished quickly. Rammohun succeeded in collecting sufficient funds and in securing a permanent place for the Samaj.

But the rise of the Brahma Samaj was an eyesore to the orthodox section of the Hindus. Bhawanee Charan Banerjee, Rammohun's associate in the *Sambad Kaumudi* turned out to be his chief opponent. In his new paper the *Samachar Chandrika* he led a campaign against Rammohun and his reform movement. At his instance a counter-movement known as the Dharma Sabha was organised with Radhakrishna Deb of Sova Bazar at its head. Rammohun Roy had as his supporters Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Kalinath Munsî, Mathuranath Mullik of Howrah, and a few other cultured and respectable men ; but all the influential Hindus of Calcutta joined the Dharma Sabha. The noble purpose of the Brahma Samaj gradually won the love and esteem of the thoughtful people and from its tempestuous beginning the Samaj has weathered through many storms and has now obtained a place for itself in India.

### **Consecration of the Brahma Samaj Building.**

Within a short time after its start the Brahma Samaj found a permanent habitation. Funds were collected for the buildings. A plot of land was purchased on Chitpore Road in the month of June, 1829. The deed in which the sale of the plot was executed mentions the name Brahma Samaj. The plot belonged to Kalinath Kar of Sutanuti, who sold it for Rs. 4,200 ; and measured 4 cottas and 2 chhataks. The purchase was made in the name of Dwarkanath Tagore, Kalinath Roy, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ramchandra Vidyabagish and Rammohun Roy. A building was erected for the Samaj on the site and the premises were conveyed by a Trust Deed to three trustees, Baikunthanath Roy, Radhaprosad Roy and Ramanath Tagore on the 8th of January, 1830. The temple was endowed with Rs. 6,080, which was deposited with Messrs. Mackintosh and Company as a permanent fund. We are told by Dr. George Smith that the building was erected by Rammohun himself. On the 11th of Magh, Sakabda 1751, the new premises were solemnly consecrated. The ceremony has been described by Montgomery Martin, the only European present on the occasion : "The institution was opened by the late Rajah Rammohun Roy, accompanied by the writer (the only European present) in 1830. There were about five hundred Hindus present and among them many Brahmins who, after the prayers and singing of hymns had been concluded, received gifts in money to a considerable extent."

The earnest prayers of Rammohun have found expression in the temple where the worship of One True God has since been carried on. The opening ceremony was a historic occasion. A new church was established, a new movement ushered in, which has changed the outlook of the Indians in various directions. In the beginning the Brahma Samaj used to celebrate the 6th of

*WHERE RAMMOHUN WORSHIPPED*



THE BRAHMA SAMAJ  
55, Upper Chitpur Road.



Bhadra as the beginning of the Brahma Samaj, but later on it was changed to the 11th of Magh and the celebrations are held very dear by the Brahmas all over India. The Maghotsava has become an occasion for thanksgiving and rejoicing, and the worshippers hold the day very dear on account of many hallowed memories associated with the day.

### **Faith and Principles of the Brahma Samaj.**

The new church did not lay down any definite creed. It was a society of the worshippers of One God. The principles of the Samaj were defined in the Trust Deed and in a pamphlet published about the same time. It was mentioned in the Trust Deed that the premises would be used as "A place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly sober religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any other particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatsoever and that no graven image statue or sculpture carving painting picture portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said messuages building land tenements hereditaments and premises and that no sacrifice offering or oblation of any kind or thing shall ever be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said message building land tenements hereditaments and premises be deprived of life either for religious purposes or for food and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary by any accident for the preservation of life) feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon and that in conducting the said worship and adoration no object animate

or inanimate that has been or is or shall hereafter become or be recognised as an object of worship by any man or set of men shall be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching or praying or in the hymns or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said Messuage or Building and that no sermon preaching discourse prayer or hymn be delivered made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of charity morality piety benevolence virtue and the strengthening of the bonds of union Between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

In this extract we find the object of the Samaj defined. It is a place of all sorts of people for the purpose of worship. There is no distinction of any kind between the worshippers. The only condition laid upon them is that they should behave in a sober manner, and they should worship there One True God. No idol worship would be permitted there, nor any sacrifice or killing of animals. As no man should be worshipped, no religion, scripture or prophets should be reviled. The main object of the worship is the promotion of charity, morality, piety, virtue, and benevolence, and it should strengthen the bonds of union between men of different persuasions. The work of the Samaj would be carried on by a resident Superintendent of good repute and well-known for his knowledge, piety and morality. The worship would be performed daily or at least once a week. The Brahma Samaj thus is not bound to any definite creed or liturgy. It allows freedom to its members in framing their rituals and prayers. It became at once a cosmopolitan body with broad catholic views, with tolerance for all other religions and faiths. All saints, prophets, and scriptures are to be held in respect.

The church thus established stands as a unique institution based upon the fundamental principles of unity of God and the brotherhood of man. All faiths

will find their fulfilment here, and it will bring out the noblest sentiments in man. It was the main contribution of Rammohun in the dispensation of Providence.

In separate pamphlets in English, Bengali, and Sanskrit the ideals of the new movement were set forth in a simple form. The *Universal Religion* based upon Sacred Authorities is an illuminating document showing the views of Rammohun and his friends regarding the proper mode of worship. In reply to the question what is meant by worship, it is said : "Worship implies the act of one with a view to please another ; but when applied to the Supreme Being, it signifies a contemplation of his attributes."

Worship is due to the Author and Governor of the Universe which is incomprehensively formed, and filled with an endless variety of men and things ; in which the sun, moon, planets and stars perform their rapid courses ; and which is fraught with animate and inanimate matter of various kinds. In this vast universe there is not one particle but has its functions to perform. Here we find a beautiful description of the immanence of God. He is imperceptible and inexpressible and yet he is the object of love and adoration of the people. We cannot fully express his likeness but we are impressed by his grandeur and are touched by his loving kindness. The worship of God is to be performed by contemplating his greatness as described in the sacred books and as is conceived of by the worshipper by the exercise of reason. The senses have to be subdued and we shall have to exert ourselves to secure the good of others. What is considered injurious to ourselves should be avoided towards others. Truth is the main object of knowledge and the attainment of truth will enable us to worship the Supreme Being, who is truth itself. Science would lead to divine knowledge and a perfect harmony between faith and reason has to be established.



For the performance of this kind of worship a suitable place is certainly preferable, but it is not absolutely necessary. In whatever place, towards whatever quarter, or at whatever time the mind is best at rest,—that place, that quarter and that time is the most proper for the performance of this worship. Worship is here elevated to the plane of higher living and not confined to the practice of rituals or going on pilgrimage to sacred places. God is to be worshipped in the recess of mind, and for this the mind and heart have to be purified and directed to the service of God.

The universal character of this form of worship is indicated by the fact that this mode of worship may be taught to all. This of course does not mean that the effect will be the same in every case. Result depends upon the state of mental preparation. The purer the mind the more effective will be this form of worship. Religion is here conceived of as a psychological experience and not a mysterious phenomenon subject to no rule or system. Further, there can be no hostility between the worshippers of the Supreme Being and the devotees of other deities. Brotherhood is the keynote of this rational system of worship. Rammohun was so much impressed by the greatness and beauty of this form of worship, that he used to call his religion as Universal Theism, and we are told that whenever he spoke of this universal religion tears used to roll down his cheeks. He used to address all his friends and companions as *Beradar* or brother, although they used to call him as *Dewanji*. Rammohun used to call everybody whom he met as brother. "And the brotherhood he believed in" says Miss Collet, "was no mere matter of names. It was Oriental in its warmth of demonstrativeness." It was Western in its equal freedom."

The Brahma Samaj was a body of worshippers. The members did not cut off their connection with the

community to which they belonged. They also conformed to the existing system. Men like Dwarkanath Tagore, Kalinath Munsî, Mathuranath Mullik and other influential members held in their houses the usual Hindu ceremonials. But on account of their connection with the Brahma Samaj the Dharma Sabha people tried to excommunicate them. These influential men adopted the practice of rewarding learned Brahmans on different occasions to maintain their influence. There was thus created a cleavage in the Hindu society. The Dharma Sabha soon lost its strength. Some of the powerful members did not themselves conform to the orthodox practices. They were accused of graver social offences and they indulged in un-Hindu manners and customs. From a notice in the *Jnananeshwan* of 1832 we find that the Sabha had already become split up, and later on the condition of the Sabha became worse. The money collected for the building and other purposes was misappropriated and the whole movement based upon spite became a colossal failure. The Brahma Samaj, on the other hand, slowly and steadily went its own way and won the love and esteem of the people.

### **The condition of the Brahma Samaj in its early stage.**

“The effects of Rammohun Roy’s labours in this department” says Mr. Adam, “on the moral and religious character of the Hindus of Bengal cannot be fully estimated by any external appearance which they may present, because his friends and followers, unlike converts to Christianity, instead of standing apart from Hindus, and Hinduism, have remained amongst them, and within its pale, and are endeavouring gradually to impregnate the whole of Hindu society with their views. My opinion is that the system of Hindu idolatry can scarcely yet be said to be shaken

by any of the direct religious influences employed for that purpose in Bengal ; but I am at the same time convinced that the only serious shock that it has sustained is not that which has proceeded from foreigners from without, but that which has proceeded from within, from Rammohun Roy and his adherents, who alone possess the qualifications that can enable religious reformers to address alike the cultivated intellect and the popular sentiment of native society." This seems to have been a correct estimate of the labours of Rammohun. Those who joined the prayers in the Brahma Samaj felt benefited by the religious talks and the devotional hymns. Some of them consecrated their life to the building up of the new church. One of them was Devendranath Tagore who became a pillar to the Samaj and who on account of his character and spiritual attainments earned the title of Maharshi. In the course of a speech Devendranath thus described the condition of the Samaj:

"When we talk of the Brahma Samaj we remember Rammohun Roy, the first well-wisher of this country. He was as robust in his body as sharp in his intellect. He had been endowed with spiritual gifts to the same extent. His beautiful countenance flashes in my imagination. It seems I am now beholding his face beaming with love and devotion, and feeling his broad liberal heart. He appeared here for the promotion of religious life. He struggled hard, from early life to the end, with different types of idolatry, and overpowering them all, he erected this Samaj as a tower of victory.

"We shudder to think of the condition of society in which he was born. It was then dark midnight ; we cannot adequately describe the condition of things in those days ; everybody was up in arms against the Brahma Samaj. Bengal was like a dense forest enveloped in darkness ; it was the haunting-ground of

all sorts of widness. Single-handed and surrounded by an army of opponents, he reclaimed the country from the thick ignorance with which it was surrounded, and for its service laid the foundation of the Brahma Samaj and brought the Brahma Dharma for the benefit of mankind. The country has made great progress in knowledge and culture. What was not then possible in twenty years is now possible in a year. No body else could have established the Brahma Dharma in the state of society in which he was born but Rammohun. With his keen intellect he pierced through the dense forest of superstition, and it was through his efforts that the light of knowledge penetrated into it.

"How strenuously he laboured for the propagation of the Brahma Dharma! He spent all his money, sacrificed his entire property and he had at last to accept service under the Emperor of Delhi. He did all this with the hope that the future generations will fulfil his dreams. It was his idea that he was preparing the ground for the new religion, and those who would come after him would fully utilise it and would make it fruitful by developing it. His efforts directed in the building up of the Brahma Samaj were hundred times more strenuous than the efforts spent in promoting his own private affairs. It was not a day, not even a month, but from his sixteenth to the fifty-ninth year he worked incessantly in this direction. Do we not feel inspired at the sight of the fruits of his labours? He pointed the way to the Brahma Dharma at the sacrifice of his life ; and let us now follow in his footsteps.

"He came first to Calcutta in 1736 Sakabda, alone and unfriended. He attracted a number of well-to-do persons by his powerful intellect and love of religion. On his arrival at Calcutta he was ridiculed by the people as an apostate, and so damned him for ever. His face should not be looked at, nor his name should be taken. This was the sort of language used towards him. But

what was there in him, by which he succeeded in changing the attitude of these people? We find that he secured the love and esteem of a number of influential men. He helped the wealthy persons in their worldly affairs, and in return they helped him in his religious work. These men never cared for the promotion of religion, but as they were under obligation to Rammohun they were won over by him, and stood by him in his religious endeavours.

"These men did not fully enter into the spirit of Rammohun. One day Rammohun suggested that it would be nice if good music could be arranged in the Brahma Samaj by eminent musicians, and his friends brought together a large number of musicians, and all sorts of songs were sung. This did not please Rammohun. He wanted songs in praise of God, and they started singing hymns of One God.

"The Brahma Samaj was brought to its new premises in 1751 Sakabda. That year the custom of Sati was suppressed, and along with that was established in opposition the Dharma Sabha. Raja Radhakanta Deb was the President of that society. Many persons were at that time hostile to the Brahma Samaj. Some of them used to say that it was a place for dancing, amusements, and music; some said it was a dining hall, and some expressed their contempt towards it by saying that the Brahma Sabha was the party of suppressing the burning of widows, whereas the Dharma Sabha was the party for burning widows. We may now see, which of these parties is successful and which defeated. But at that time the Dharma Sabha was a powerful party, and it was a critical time for the Brahma Samaj. Some threatened to burn it up, some said that they would kill Rammohun, but Rammohun would fearlessly come to the Brahma Samaj, alone or with friends, and offer his prayers there. Like pilgrims to sacred places he would come from Maniktala to

Chitpore Road on foot and return home in a carriage. He used to come to the Brahma Samaj in a spirit of reverence. The Europeans often attended the service." The men of those days were not seen at the time when Devendranath Tagore was speaking. The only man of Rammohun's days was Bistu, who used to lead the choir then, and continued to do so till the latter days.

In the year that the new buildings were erected for the Samaj Rammohun left for England. The Samaj was left in charge of Pandit Ramchandra Vidyabagish. He was a teacher in the Hindu College and looked after the Samaj with great devotion. But on the departure of Rammohun the interest of his friends waned, and Vidyabagish alone kept up the torch burning. It was he who drew Devendranath Tagore to the Brahma Samaj.

The sacrifices made by Rammohun cannot be estimated. He got heavily involved in debt and his house on Upper Circular Road was sold by auction. It was a big property. From a notice issued for the sale we find that the land measured 15 bighas, and within it there was an extensive garden. There were three halls, six rooms, two verandahs on the upper flat, and several rooms on the lower flat, besides the godown, kitchen, and the stables. Within the compound there were three big tanks, and the place could be reached from the Government House in 20 minutes by carriage. On the north of the house and garden was the garden of Gadadhar Mitra, on the south the Sukeas Street, and the garden of Roopnarayan Mullik on the west and north-west. This property Rammohun lost almost at the time when the new premises of the Brahma Samaj were consecrated. But he never mentioned the troubles in which he was involved. He bore silently the burden that was laid upon him.

### **The Brahma Hymns.**

Rammohun was not only an intellectual man but he possessed a deeply devotional spirit. The innermost feelings of this great champion of rationalism were poured forth in his songs which were sung at the time of the religious exercises. He might have got the idea of adding music to prayer from the Christian service, but he very often referred to the practice of the Sikhs and other religious sects who used to hold their devotions in accompaniment of music. The hymns he composed were not only very edifying, the language of these hymns has greatly enriched the Bengali literature. Each one is a beautiful piece, and carries the audience to the ethereal region. Some of them have been translated, and a large number printed in his Bengali Works. If anything has made the Brahma Samaj popular it is the hymns. They have come out from the very depths of the hearts of the composers, and go straight into the hearts of the people. Many people who used to come to the Brahma Samaj for the sake of music did later on identify themselves with the movement. The Brahma hymns have thoroughly changed the social life of Bengal. In place of ribalds and obscene songs the social gatherings are now entertained by edifying songs. Besides his own compositions he included in the Hymn Book songs composed by his friends ; and we are told the publication underwent three editions in his life time. Pandit Ramgati Nyayaratna in his history of the Bengali language and literature writes about these hymns:

“Rammohun could compose very excellent songs. His hymns could, possibly, melt the stony hearts, draw the wicked to God, and divert the minds of the men sunk in the worldly affairs to higher things. These hymns were as deeply devotional, as highly musical. Many musical experts sing them with reverence.”

These hymns, says Nagendranath Chatterjee, are very helpful for self-realisation. They are based upon the knowledge of Vedanta, and stimulate the virtues of self-control and charity. One of the most popular hymns has been thus rendered into English prose :

“Meditate on the Only One

Who pervades land, water and air,

Who has created this Universe of which there is  
no bound.

He knows all, but none can know Him.

He is Lord of Lords, the God of gods, the Master  
of masters:

Let us know this adorable One.”



## CHAPTER IX

### VISIT TO ENGLAND

#### Object of his visit.

Rammohun had long contemplated to visit England. So late as 1817 he wrote to his friend Mr. Digby that he had a mind to go abroad. But this intention remained unfulfilled till 1830. His fame had reached England long before he reached that island. Many distinguished persons were anxious to meet this scholar and reformer. On account of his engagements in India Rammohun could hardly think of undertaking the voyage. Certain circumstances happened which helped him in his long cherished project. The Emperor of Delhi had certain grievances against the Government of India. He wanted to represent his case before the King of England. On hearing of the intended visit of Rammohun he sent an agent to him to take up his cause. The title of Raja was conferred by the Emperor as a mark of distinction upon him as his *Elchi* (envoy). Rammohun wrote to the Government about the title and the task entrusted to him by the Emperor; but the Government did not recognise the title or the status of an envoy. But this did not prevent Rammohun from undertaking the task of representing the Emperor as a private individual. So he wrote to Lord William Bentinck that he would like to proceed to England on his own account. The letter is quoted here to show the way in which Rammohun approached the Governor-General:

"From the kindness I have so often experienced from your Lordship, I trust to be pardoned for my present intrusion in a matter solely concerning myself, but in which your Lordship's condescension has induced me to persuade myself that you are pleased to take some interest.

"Having at length surmounted all the obstacles of a domestic nature that have hitherto opposed my long cherished intention of visiting England, I am now resolved to proceed to that land of liberty by one of the vessels that will sail in November, and from a due regard to the purport of the late Mr. Secretary Stirling's letter of 15th January last, and other considerations, I have determined not to appear there as the Envoy of His Majesty Akbar the Second, but as a private individual.

"I am satisfied that in thus divesting myself of all public character, my zealous services in behalf of His Majesty need not be abated. I even trust that their chance of success may be improved by being thus exempted from all jealousy of a political nature to which they might by misapprehension be subjected.

"As public report has fixed an early day in October for your Lordship's departure to examine personally into the condition of the inhabitants of the Upper Provinces, I take the present occasion as the last that may offer in this country for the expression of my sincere wishes for your Lordship's success in all your philanthropic designs for the improvement and benefit of my countrymen. I need not add that any commands for England with which your Lordship may honour me shall receive from me the most respectful attention, and I beg to subscribe myself your Lordship's most humble and grateful servant."

Rammohun Roy thought that he would be able to promote the interests of the Emperor of Delhi more freely as a private individual than as an official agent.

So he was not sorry for the Government of India refusing to acknowledge him as the Envoy. The Emperor had offered him Rs. 70,000 for his expenses, and there was an understanding that if he succeeded in his mission and secured for the Emperor an increase in the annuity by eight lakhs of rupees, then half the annuity of one year would be paid to him, and he would also receive an allowance of Rs. 5,000 a month. If the annuity was less then the remuneration and the allowance would be paid in the same proportion.

Besides the cause of the Emperor, Rammohun had in mind two other objects in view. There was a strong agitation started by the Dharma Sabha party to set aside the Regulation regarding the abolition of the Sati, and the appeal was going to be heard by the Privy Council. Rammohun felt it necessary to counteract this agitation by his presence in England, and he carried a memorial with him for the purpose.

Parliament was also considering the question of renewing the Charter of the East India Company. As before the renewal the situation in India would have to be reviewed Rammohun intended to press for a number of reforms. His main object was the promotion of the welfare of his country. But the talk of his voyage created a commotion in the orthodox circle. No Hindu of any importance had visited England before this. About forty years ago the Peshwa of Poona sent his agents to represent his case before the Government of England but these representatives did not receive any public attention.

With regard to the visit of Rammohun Miss Collet says:

“In him the New England first became acquainted with New India which has been growing up under British rule. That is a connection which has already borne much fruit, and which seems destined to play a

greater part in the near future. And if we glance beyond the limits of India and of Empire, we can hardly fail to see in Rammohun's visit a landmark in the general history of modern civilization. The West had long gone to the East. With him the East began to come to the West. India has followed in his wake, and Japan and even China have followed in the wake of India. Leading scions of the hoariest civilizations are now eager pupils in the schools of the youngest civilizations. As a consequence the East is being rapidly occidentalised; and there are signs, not a few, of a gradual Orientalising of the West. This movement towards the healing of the schism which has for ages divided mankind, and the effort to intermingle more thoroughly the various ingredients of humanity, are rich in promise for the humanising and unifying of man. The role which Rammohun Roy had played in this world-drama among his own countrymen was fitly crowned by his appearance in the chief city of the globe."

The visit of Rammohun to England has been described by Miss Collet as an epoch-making event. In fact England came to know of the inner greatness of India by coming in direct contact with him, and the honour shown to Rammohun was greatly appreciated by the Indians as honour done to this country. But his countrymen at the time wrote strongly against the intended visit. A correspondent wrote a lengthy letter to the *Samachar Darpan* and we give below the purport of the letter to show the feelings of the people:

"The visit of Rammohun Roy has done no good to this country, as he is not a well-wisher of the public, and it is well known that he has done grave harm to the Hindus. But we cannot say whether it will do any good to his few friends and to his sons. The people here felt greatly irritated for interfering with their greatest thing, the religion. Before he started his work of illumination

the people were quite happy, and men of all classes could perform their religious duties undisturbed. As a Hindu he earned some money with the help of some Englishmen, specially of a Civilian named Mr. Digby. Then he came to Calcutta and formed the acquaintance of a few wealthy persons. In co-operation with them he started a society called the Atmiya Sabha. Some persons joined it in the hope that it would be of some service to the country. But when they came to know that this society was likely to undermine the Hindu social life they gradually cut off their connection with it and in course of time the Atmiya Sabha broke up. Since then it became known that his ways were not of the Hindus, and the Hindus began to drive him off from their community.

"As for example, he was not allowed to become a member of the Hindu College Committee. Another gentleman was also not accepted on account of his association with Rammohun Roy, in spite of the efforts of Justice Harington.

"Rammohun published a number of books, which were greatly resented by the good people, for in these books he encouraged the people to throw off the old customs. Only a few unwary persons accepted his views. When Rammohun could not become a member of the Hindu College, he started a school of his own for imparting English education. The school, attracted a few students of the lower classes, who have accepted his views.

"He has also supported the movement for colonisation, which is not considered desirable by a large number of his countrymen."

This was a spiteful letter and the editor of the *Darpan* suspected that it might have been the work of Bhawani Charan Banerjee who all along opposed Rammohun.

The hostility of a large section of Hindus to his projected voyage made Rammohun proceed very cautiously. He did not like to be called an outcaste. He tried to prove that he still retained his connection with the Hindu community. He did not discard the sacred thread, the mark of his caste as a Brahman, and took with him a cook of the same caste to prepare food for him.

### **The Voyage.**

Nothing daunted Rammohun made preparations for the voyage. He made arrangements for the work of the Brahma Samaj, and his own family affairs. Before his departure he paid a visit to Dwarkanath Tagore and would not leave his place without seeing young Devendra of whom he was very fond. This visit left its impress upon the future leader of the Brahma Samaj.

Rammohun procured letters of introduction to distinguished men of England. Col. J. Young in a letter to the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham thus wrote about him:

"If I were beside you, and could explain matters fully, you would comprehend the greatness of the undertaking—his going on board ship to a foreign and distant land, a thing not to be named among Hindoos, and least of all among Brahmins.\* His grand object, besides the natural one of satisfying his own laudable spirit of inquiry, has been to set a laudable example to his benighted countrymen; and every one of the slow and gradual moves that he has made preparatory to his actually quitting India, has been marked by the same discretion of judgment. He waited patiently until he had by perseverance and exertion acquired a little but respectable party of disciples. He talked of going to England from year to year since 1823 to familiarise the

minds of the orthodox by degrees to this step, and that his friends in the meantime increased in numbers and in confidence. . . . He now judges that the time is come, and that the public mind is pretty well ripe for the exploit.

“The good which this excellent and extraordinary man has already effected by his writings and example cannot be told. But for his exertions Suttee would be in full vigour at the present day, and the influence of the priesthood in all its ancient force;—he has given the latter a shake from which, aided by education and the spirit of bold inquiry gone forth among the Hindoos, it can never recover. . . . . He is withal one of the most modest men I have ever met with.

“It is no compliment to such a man that even a Governor-General like the present, who, though a man of the most honest intentions, suspects everyone and trusts nobody, and who knows that R. M. R. greatly disapproves of many of the acts of the Government, should have shown him so much respect as to furnish him with introductions to friends of rank and political influence in England.”

From this letter it appears that Lord Bentinck was good enough to write about Rommohun to some friends of his. In his voyage he was accompanied by Raja Ram, then a boy of twelve, Ramruttun Mukherjee who went with him as his cook and a servant named Ram Hary Das. The names of the attendants were kept secret for fear of persecution. He also took with him two cows for obtaining fresh milk. We can hardly imagine to-day the difficulties which confronted the pioneer in going to a foreign land, which was then condemned by the Hindu community. The journey was not without peril. The vessels had to go by Cape Colony and the voyage took him nearly five months. The party sailed by the *Albion* on November 15, 1830, and reached Liverpool on April 8, 1831.

A narrative of the voyage was published in the *India Gazette* of February 18, 1834, by a fellow-passenger, Mr. James Sutherland, later on Principal of the Hooghly College. The account given here provides an interesting picture of the traits in Rammohun's character :

"On board ship Rammohun Roy took his meals in his own cabin, and at first suffered considerable inconvenience from the want of a separate fireplace, having nothing but a common *Choola* on board. His servants, too, fell desperately sea-sick, (though, as if his ardour supported him against it, he himself never felt this malady at all) and took possession of his cabin, never moving from it, and making it as may easily be conceived, no enviable domicile; in fact they compelled him to retreat to the lockers; but still the kindness of his nature would not allow him to remove them. The greater part of the day he read, chiefly I believe, Sanskrit and Hebrew. In the forenoon and the evening he took an airing on the deck, and always got involved in an animated discussion. After dinner when the cloth was removed and the dessert was on the table, he would come out of his cabin also and join in the conversation and take a glass of wine. He was always cheerful and so won upon the esteem of all on board that there was quite a competition who should pay him the most attention, and even the sailors seemed to render him any little service in their power. . . . His equanimity was quite surprising. In more than one case everything in his cabin was quite afloat owing to the sea washing in . . . but it never disturbed his serenity. If anything threw him off his equilibrium of temperament, it was the prevalence of the contrary winds, because of his anxiety to get on, and his alarm lest the great question of the Company's charter should come on before he arrived in England."

When Ramruttun Mukherjee returned to India he told Babu Isan Chandra Basu who collected the works of



Rammohun for publication that on account of sea-sickness he could not prepare food separately. The food was possibly supplied in the cabin. On reaching Cape Town the Raja went ashore for about an hour or two. In this short time he visited many places and made a donation to the funds started for establishing a University there. His sympathy for everything noble and good was expressed in this act. While returning on board the ship he had a serious fall from the gangway ladder. By this accident he broke one of his legs and remained lame for eighteen months, and could never fully recover from its effects. So great was his love of freedom that in this condition he went to pay respects to the tri-colour flag of France which country had then overthrown the autocratic rule of the Bourbons. Thus the narrative of Mr. Sutherland goes on :

“But no bodily suffering could repress his mental ardour. Two French frigates, under the revolutionary flag, the glorious tri-colour, were lying in Table Bay; and lame as he was, he would insist on visiting them. The sight of these colours seemed to kindle the flame of his enthusiasm, and to render him insensible to pain.

“His reception was, of course, worthy of the French character and of him. He was conducted over the vessels and endeavoured to convey by the aid of interpreters how much he was delighted to be under the banner that waved over their decks,—an evidence of the glorious triumph of right over might; and as he left the vessels he repeated emphatically ‘Glory, glory, glory to France.’”

“Some of the most distinguished people at the Cape left their cards for him at the Hotel, and some called on board, but not the Governor.

“As we approached England, his anxiety to know what was passing there became most urgent, and he implored the captain to lose no opportunity of speaking

to any vessel outward. At length near the equator, we fell in with a vessel only four days out, that brought us intelligence of the extraordinary circumstance of the second reading of the Reform Bill being carried in the House in which the Tories had so long commanded majorities, by a single vote. . . . Rammohun Roy was elated with the prospect. A few days afterwards, at that eventful crisis in our history, . . . Rammohun Roy first landed in Great Britain.

“The effect of this contagious enthusiasm of a whole people in favour of a grand political change upon such a mind as his was of course electrifying, and he caught up the tone of the new society in which he found himself with so much ardour that at one time I had fears that this fever of excitement would prove too much for him.”

### **At Liverpool.**

On the 8th of April, 1831, Rammohun landed at Liverpool. On his arrival there he received offers of hospitality from many quarters. He was invited by William Rathbone, Esq., to come and stay at Greenbank where many distinguished visitors to the city had lived before. But the Raja preferred to live independently at Radley's Hotel, and there many respectable citizens called upon him to extend their welcome. One of the visitors had been to Calcutta as a midshipman, and went to visit Rammohun but unfortunately did not find him in his magnificent residence in Circular Road. The Raja was very glad to meet this man who had been to his house. He was specially welcomed by those who had watched with interest the progress of his movement. “His arrival was no sooner known in Liverpool” says Mr. Sutherland, “than every man of any distinction in the place hastened to call upon him, and he got into inextricable confusion with all his engagements, making half a dozen sometimes

for the same evening. He was out morning, noon, and night. On all occasions, whether at breakfast or dinner, a number of persons was assembled to meet him; and he was constantly involved in animated discussions on politics or theology."

The first public place he visited at Liverpool was a Unitarian Chapel where Mr. Grundy preached. At the close of the service the congregation flocked round Rammohun. He was greatly moved to see a mural tablet there in memory of one Mr. Tait whom he had known in India. The people assembled at the chapel were surprised at the way in which the Raja spoke in English. Every one then came forward to shake hands with him; it took about an hour for the Raja to move out of the church. At night he attended the service conducted by the Rev. Mr. Scoresby in an Anglican Church.

But the most interesting event at Liverpool was his interview with William Roscoe, the great historian of the Medicis. He was then confined to bed on account of a paralytic attack. As soon as he heard of the arrival of Rammohun he sent a message to see him. The interview which took place between the two distinguished savants has thus been described by his son Henry Roscoe in the Memoir of his father:

"It will be recollected that at a very early period of his life Mr. Roscoe had collected the moral precepts of the New Testament into a small volume, to which he gave the title of 'Christian Morality, as contained in the Precepts of the New Testament, in the language of Jesus Christ.' In the decline of life this youthful attempt was recalled to his mind by a work of a similar character proceeding from a very unlooked for quarter. This was 'The Precepts of Jesus,' collected, arranged and published at Calcutta by a learned Brahmin, Rammohun Roy, who, having become a convert to Christianity,

endeavoured in this manner to recommend the religion of Christ to his countrymen. The character and history of this extraordinary man excited in the highest degree the interest and admiration of Mr. Roscoe. Not only had he emancipated his mind from the dark and cruel superstitions in which he had been educated, but he had cultivated his intellect to a degree which few of the natives of more favoured climes attain. For the purpose of studying the Scriptures he had rendered himself familiar with the Hebrew and the Greek, and had improved his mind by the study of various branches of knowledge. But these were his least merits. The great excellence of his character consisted in his enlarged views with regard to the welfare and improvement of his species, and in the benevolent zeal with which he promoted every project for the extension of education and of useful knowledge amongst the inhabitants of India. Of this zeal he gave a striking proof in the erection of a printing-press in Calcutta, at which his own work, 'The Precepts of Jesus,' and other volumes calculated to extend the influence of Christianity amongst the Hindus, were printed.

"It is not surprising that with a man of this high and enlightened character Mr. Roscoe should be desirous of communicating; and accordingly he took advantage of the opportunity of one of his friends (the late Mr. Thomas Hodgson Fletcher of Liverpool) proceeding to India, to transmit to Rammohun a small collection of his works, which he accompanied with the following letter:—

" 'Although I have not the honour of being known to you, I am no stranger to your writings, nor to the uniform and noble manner in which you have asserted the cause of true and genuine Christianity, against the sophisms and absurdities of those who would persuade us that they are the only objects of the benevolence of

the great Creator and Common Father of all His offspring. It seems strange even to myself that so long a time has elapsed, in which I have been aware how nearly my opinions on religious subjects have agreed with your own, without introducing myself to your acquaintance. The fact is, that within the first twenty years of a life which is now verging on its seventy-eighth year, I had devoted myself to the task of forming, as far as possible, a complete code of moral conduct from the precepts of Jesus Christ as given in the New Testament, in his own words; in which I had made a considerable progress; and circumstances prevented my completing it, yet the impression which the attempt made on my mind convinced me, that true Christianity consists alone in doing the will of our Father which is in heaven, which will is not only sufficiently, but most powerfully and beautifully enforced in that sacred volume.

“ ‘In my riper years, as the affairs of the world engaged my attention, I have been employed on most of the great subjects of human interest; and have written and published on politics, jurisprudence, history, criticism, science, and literature, according to the measure of my abilities, and with the consciousness, in whatever department I have been engaged, of having promoted, to the best of my power, the improvement and happiness of my fellow-creatures.

“ ‘Some of these works I would even flatter myself may, perhaps, have occurred to your notice; but at all events, that I may not suffer the little that remains to me of this life to pass away without being better known to you, and having at present a favourable opportunity of sending you a few volumes on various subjects that may give you a tolerable idea how I have been employed, I have made a specimen of my writings, which I have to desire, you will accept as the gift of one friend

to another; in order that, if they should be received in the same spirit in which they are sent, they may in fact diminish the barrier which Providence has placed between us, and introduce us to the society of each other, to be united, during our future lives, as true and faithful followers of our common Master.

“ ‘The opportunity to which I have above alluded is that of a young friend who is about to depart from hence on a voyage to Calcutta, where it is his intention to take up his residence in a mercantile capacity, and who is desirous of an introduction to you, for the freedom of which I must trust myself to your indulgence.

“ ‘We have, for some time past, been flattered with hopes of seeing you in this kingdom, but I fear I am not destined to have that pleasure. At all events, it will be a great gratification to me if I should survive the attacks of the paralytic complaint, under which I have now laboured for some years, till I hear that you have received this very sincere mark of the deep respect and attachment which I have so long entertained for you, and which I hope to renew in a happier state of being

“ ‘I am, my dear Sir,  
Your assured friend and fellow-christian,  
“ ‘W. R.

“ ‘To the celebrated and learned  
Rammohun Roy, Calcutta.’

“ ‘Before this letter could reach its destination Mr. Roscoe had the unexpected gratification of hearing that the extraordinary person to whom it was addressed was

already on his voyage to Europe. This intelligence was quickly followed by his arrival at Liverpool, where his character and striking appearance excited much curiosity and interest. The interview between him and Mr. Roscoe will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. After the usual gesture of eastern salutation, and with a mixture of oriental expression, Rammohun Roy said, 'Happy and proud am I—proud and happy to behold a man whose fame has extended not only over Europe, but over every part of the world.' 'I bless God' replied Mr. Roscoe, 'that I have been permitted to live to see this day.' Their conversation chiefly turned upon the objects which had led Rammohun Roy to this country, and in the course of it he displayed an intimate acquaintance with the political and commercial state of England."

During his stay at Liverpool the Raja had the privilege of meeting many respectable people. They were surprised at his strong liberal sentiments with which he supported the Reform Bill, and his intimate familiarity with the Christian literature. In the public places and drawing-rooms wherever he appeared he made profound impression. At the instance of two Quaker families, Cropper and Benson, he came in contact with men of all denominations, High Churchmen, Baptists, Unitarians and Deists, and he was pleased to see the good spirit in which they all met together. He made the acquaintance of the German phrenologist Spurzheim at the house of Mr. William Rathbone. Although he did not entertain any high opinion of his science his feelings towards him were always very kindly.

While at Liverpool he witnessed the Railway lines then laid from that city to Manchester and in order to visit the industrial centres he went to the latter place by Railway. It took him an hour and twenty minutes

to travel thirty miles, which was then considered a wonder. The visit to Manchester created great enthusiasm among the workingmen and the scene has been thus described by Mr. Sutherland:

“The scene at Manchester, when he visited the great manufactories, was very amusing. All workmen, I believe, struck work, and men, women and children rushed in crowds to see ‘*the King of Ingee.*’ Many of the great unwashed insisted upon shaking hands with him; some of the *ladies* who had not stayed to make their toilets very carefully wished to embrace him, and he with difficulty escaped. . . . The aid of the police was required to make way for him to the manufactories, and when he entered, it was necessary to close and bolt the gate to keep out the mob. . . . After shaking hands with hundreds of them he turned round and addressed them, hoping they would all support the King and his Ministers in obtaining Reform; so happily had he caught the spirit of the people. He was answered with loud shouts, ‘The King and Reform for ever.’ ”

On his return from Manchester he stayed at Liverpool for nine days more and then he left for London, as he was anxious to be present at the third reading of the Reform Bill, and to watch the discussion in Parliament regarding the future Government of India. Mr. Roscoe gave a letter of introduction to Lord Brougham, which is reproduced here:

“I have the great honour and very singular pleasure of introducing to your Lordship’s kind notice and attention the bearer of this, the celebrated and learned Rammohun Roy, who is just arrived here from Calcutta. and of whom you must have frequently heard as the illustrious convert from Hindooism to Christianity, and the author of the selections from the New Testament of



'The Precepts of Jesus'; by the publication and diffusion of which amongst the natives of the East reasonable hopes are now entertained, that in a short time, the shocking system and cruel practices of Paganism will be abolished, and the people of those populous regions be restored to the pure and simple precepts of morality and brotherly love. Amongst the many and important motives which have induced him to leave his country and connections, and visit this island, I understand he is induced to hope he may be of some assistance in promoting the cause of the natives of India in the great debate which must ere long take place here, respecting the Charter of the East India Company; but I have yet seen so little of him, from his numerous engagements here, that I must leave your Lordship to learn his intentions from himself, which you will find him very capable of explaining in his own strong and appropriate English idiom. One great reason, as I understand, for his haste to leave this for London, is to be present to witness the great measure that will be taken by your Lordship and your illustrious colleagues for promoting the long wished-for reform of his native country. On the present occasion, I will not trouble you further than to request, that, if it should not be inconsistent with your Lordship's station and convenience, you would obtain for our distinguished visitor the benefit of a seat under the gallery in the House of Commons, on the debate on the third reading of the Reform Bill; which favour I am anxious he should owe rather to your Lordship (if you have no objection to it) than to other individuals, to whom I understand, he has letters of introduction."

Unfortunately the writer of this letter, Mr. William Roscoe did not long survive. He passed away from this world on the 30th of June. Rammohun Roy did not forget the kindness of this man who was almost on the brink of his life. By the end of April the Raja left for the capital of the Empire.

### Arrival in London.

On the way from Liverpool to London wherever he stopped the inn was surrounded by curious spectators. He was delighted to see the varied scenery of England, specially the factories, manor houses and other evidences of the prosperity of the country. Late in the evening he reached London. He was first taken to a hotel in Newgate Street but as the place was not found quite suitable he removed to Adelphi Hotel at about ten at night. But his friends had arranged rooms for him at a hotel in Bond Street. At midnight Jeremy Bentham who was living a retired life for some years, and had not visited any body, called on him, and when he found that the Raja was in bed he left a card with a note "From Jeremy Bentham to his friend Rammohun Roy." It was a great compliment to Rammohun that he received this signal honour from the distinguished philosopher. They met afterwards and there grew up an intimacy between the two reformers. Bentham used to call him as his "intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind." He even pressed that Rammohun should seek election to Parliament.

Shortly after his arrival in London the Raja took up his residence at 125 Regent Street, and there he had to meet a large number of visitors as the representative of India. Mr. Sutherland writes :

"As soon as it was known in London that the great Brahman philosopher had arrived, the most distinguished men in the country crowded to pay their respects to him, and he had scarcely got into his lodgings in Regent Street, when his door was besieged with carriages from eleven in the morning till four in the afternoon; until this constant state of excitement (for he caught the tone of the day and vehemently discussed politics with everyone)

actually made him ill. . . . when his physicians gave positive orders to his footman not to admit visitors."

To his great regret Rammohun could not be present in Parliament when the Reform Bill was finally discussed but he had the satisfaction to know that the Bill had been passed. His feelings about the measure are recorded in a letter which he wrote to Mr. William Rathbone (July 31, 1832) after the passing of the Bill:

"I am *now* happy to find myself justified in congratulating you and my other friends at Liverpool on the *complete* success of the Reform Bills, notwithstanding the violent opposition and want of political principle on the part of the aristocrats. The nation can no longer be a prey of the few who used to fill their purses at the expense, nay, to the ruin of the people, for a period of upwards of fifty years. The Ministers have honestly and firmly discharged their duty, and provided the people with means of securing their rights. I hope and pray that the people, the mighty people of England, may now in like manner do theirs, cherishing public spirit and liberal principles, at the same time banishing bribery, corruption and selfish interests, from public proceedings.

"As I publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated I would renounce my connection with this country, I refrained from writing to you or any other friend in Liverpool until I knew the result. Thank heaven I can now feel proud of being one of your fellow subjects, and heartily rejoice that I have had the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation, nay of the whole world.

"Pray remember me kindly to Mr. Cropper and Mr. Benson, and present my best respects to Mrs. Rathbone and love to the children; believe me etc."

In the postscript he wrote "If the German philosopher is still at Liverpool, be good enough to

remember me kindly to him, and inform him that we have succeeded in the reform question without having recourse to the principles of phrenology."

The Raja soon attracted the attention of a good many of the nobility of both Liberal and Tory parties. It is rather strange that he was very popular in the Tory circles. Through Lord Brougham to whom he had a letter from Mr. Roscoe he was introduced to many ladies and gentlemen of position. He was introduced into the House of Lords by the King's brother, Duke of Cumberland, and it was on account of the Raja's influence with the Tory peers that they did not vote against the Indian Jury Bill. The Duke of Sussex became so fond of him that he invited the Raja to spend a day with him. He also was the guest of the Duke of Devonshire for a day and the Duke became very friendly with him. In this way the Raja formed a large circle of friends. The London crowd seeing the figure of an oriental magnate used to greet him as "Tippoo." He was received with great honour everywhere.

### Reception in London.

His relations with the Unitarians were very intimate. They watched his career in India with great interest and were very happy to meet him among themselves. On his arrival in London he formed the acquaintance of Dr. Carpenter who took him to a Unitarian Church and to a meeting of the Unitarian Association. The proceedings of the meeting over which the Rev. Robert Aspland presided were reported in the *Monthly Repository* of June, 1831. With regard to the meeting Dr. Carpenter writes: "and in the evening I conducted him to the crowded meeting of our Association, at which the father of my Colleague, Rev. Robert Aspland presided; where the enlightened Brahmin was welcomed as a fellow-labourer, and received with every mark of deep and

heartfelt respect; and where he himself, though weakened by accident and indisposition, expressed in simple but correct language—the remembrance of which and his appearance, presses vividly on my heart as I commit the thought to writing—his humble appreciation of himself, and his desires to promote whatever appeared to him the cause of truth and duty.”

The report as it appeared in the journal mentioned above is reproduced here in full:

“Just at this period the Rajah Rammohun Roy made his appearance on the platform, and was greeted with the cordial applause of the meeting.

“The Rev. Chairman.—Our illustrious friend (for such I trust he will allow me to call him) will permit me to state that his presence creates among us a sensation which he perhaps will hardly understand. It does so, because in his person and example we see an instance of the power of the human mind in recovering itself from the errors of ages; and because we conceive that we see in him, with his intelligence and character, one of the best and most disinterested judges of the claims of Unitarianism to be the original Christian doctrine.

“Dr. Bowring, (afterwards Sir John Bowring, the biographer of Jeremy Bentham).—

“I feel it as a very signal honour to have entrusted to my care a resolution, the object of which is to welcome our illustrious oriental friend, and to communicate all we feel and hope towards him. I ought not to say all we feel and hope, for I am sure that it is impossible to give expression to those sentiments of interest and anticipation with which his advent here is associated in all our minds. I recollect some writers have indulged themselves with inquiring what they should feel if any of those time-honoured men whose

names have lived through the vicissitudes of ages, should appear among them. They have endeavoured to imagine what would be their sensations if a Plato or a Socrates, a Milton or a Newton, were unexpectedly to honour them with their presence. I recollect that a poet, who has well been called divine, has drawn a beautiful picture of the feelings of those who first visited the southern hemisphere, and there saw, for the first time, that beautiful constellation, the Golden Cross. It was with feelings such as they underwent, that I was overwhelmed when I stretched out in your name the hand of welcome to the Rajah Rammohun Roy. In my mind the effect of distance is very like the effect of time; and he who comes among us from a country thousands of miles off. must be looked upon with the same interest as those illustrious men who lived thousands of years ago. But in the case of our friend, his coming may be deemed an act of heroism of which the European cannot form a just estimate. When Peter the Great went forth to instruct himself in the civilization of the South,—when he left the barbarous honours of his own court to perfect himself in ship-building at Saardam, he presented himself to the public eye in a more illustrious manner than after any of his most glorious victories. But Peter had to overcome no prejudices—he had to break down no embarrassments; for he knew that he had left those who were behind him with an enthusiasm equal to his own, and he knew that he would be received by them, when he would return, with the same display of enthusiasm. Our illustrious friend, however, has made a more serious experiment: he has ventured to accomplish that which perhaps none other, connected, as he is, with the highest honours of the Brahminical race, ever attempted: he has ventured to do that which would have been regarded with incredulity ten years ago, and which hereafter will crown his name with the highest honour.

He will go back to his friends in the East and tell them how interested we are in them, and how delighted we are to communicate to them through him all our desires to do everything in our power to advance their improvement and felicity. Time would fail me if I were to attempt to go over the history of our illustrious guest,—if I were to tell how eminently and constantly he has exerted himself for the removal of misery, and the promotion of happiness. If at this moment Hindoo piles are not burning for the reception of widows, it is owing to his interference, to his exhortations, to his arguments. Can we look on such benefits as these without considering him as our brother? Can he come here without hearing our enthusiastic voices telling him how we have marked his progress, and without our proffering to him, if not our note of triumph, at least our accents of gratitude? It was to us a delightful dream that we might, on some occasion, welcome him here; but though it was a hope, it was but a trembling one, of which we scarcely dared to anticipate the fruition. But its accomplishment has produced recollections so interesting, that this day will be an epoch in our history, and no one will forget the occasion when the Brahmin stood among us to receive our welcome, and the assurance of the interest we take in all he does and in all he shall do; to which I may add that our delight will be too great if we can in any way advance these great plans, the progress of which is the grand object of his exertions. Sir, I move with great pleasure, 'That the members of this Association feel a deep interest in the amelioration of the condition of the natives of British India; that we trust their welfare and improvement will never be lost sight of by the Legislature and Government of our country; that we have special pleasure in the hope that juster notions and purer forms of religion are gradually advancing amongst them; and that our illustrious visitor from that distant region, the

Rajah Rammohun Roy, be hereby certified of our sympathy in his arduous and philanthropic labours, of our admiration of his character, of our delight at his presence amongst us, and of our conviction that the magnanimous and beneficent course which he has marked out for himself and hitherto consistently pursued, will entitle him to the blessings of his countrymen and of mankind, as it will assuredly receive those of future generations.'

"Dr. Kirkland (late President of Harvard University, United States).—

"In the absence of the Hon. Henry Wheaton, who was to have seconded this motion, but is prevented by indisposition, I have great pleasure in seconding the motion. It is well known that the Rajah is an object of lively interest in America; but he is expected there with the greatest anxiety.

"The Rev. Chairman.—In proposing this resolution I beg to suggest that the assembly should rise in unanimous approbation of its object.

"The meeting accordingly rose, and carried the resolution by acclamation.

"Rammohun Roy.—I am too unwell and too much exhausted to take any active part in this meeting; but I am much indebted to Dr. Kirkland and to Dr. Bowring for the honour they have conferred on me by calling me their fellow-labourer, and to you for admitting me to this Society as a brother, and one of your fellow labourers. I am not sensible that I have done anything to deserve being called a promoter of this cause; but with respect to your faith I may observe, that I too believe in the one God, and that I believe in almost all the doctrines that you do; but I do this for my own salvation and for my own peace. For the objects of your Society I must confess that I have done very little



to entitle me to your gratitude or such admiration of my conduct. What have I done?—I do not know what I have done!—If I have rendered you any services they must be very trifling—very trifling I am sure. I laboured under many disadvantages. In the first instance, the Hindoos and the Brahmins, to whom I am related, are all hostile to the cause; and even many Christians there are more hostile to our common cause than the Hindoos and the Brahmins. I have honour for the appellation of Christian; but they always tried to throw obstacles in the way of the principles of Unitarian Christianity. I have found some of them here; but more there. They abhor the notion of simple precepts. They always lay a stress on mystery and mystical points, which serve to delude their followers; and the consequence is, that we meet with such opposition in India that our progress is very slight; and I feel ashamed on my side that I have not made any progress that might have placed me on a footing with my fellow-labourers in this part of the globe. However, if this is the true system of Christianity, it will prevail, notwithstanding all the opposition that may be made to it. Scripture seconds your system of religion, common sense is always on your side; while power and prejudice are on the side of your opponents. There is a battle going on between reason, scripture and common sense; and wealth, power and prejudice. These three have been struggling with the other three; but I am convinced that your success, sooner or later, is certain. I feel over-exhausted, and therefore conclude with an expression of my heartfelt thanks for the honour that from time to time you have conferred on me, and which I shall never forget to the last moment of my existence.

“The Chairman.—The Rajah will now allow me, as the representative of this assembly, to take him once more by the hand, and to repeat in your name our deep and heartfelt thanks for his presence on this occasion.”

In a beautiful speech the Rev. W. J. Fox, Editor of the *Monthly Repository*, and friend and patron of the young poet Robert Browning, referred to the Rajah:

"And when our orignal friend shall return and return he must, (long be it delayed) to his native regions, may he have to report that Europe is not only as supreme as he esteems it in sciences, arts and arms, but is beginning to aspire to a supremacy in benevolence which shall annihilate all other supremacies, and even in the end its own, by assimilating and exalting, human feeling and human character in all the regions of the world. The Rajah remarked to me the other day, with somewhat of an indignant feeling, that he had been shown a painting of Jesus Christ and that the painter was false, for he had given him the pale European countenance, not remembering that Jesus Christ was an oriental. The criticism was just. Those theologians have painted falsely too, who have portrayed Christianity as a cold intellectual religion, and not given it that rich oriental colouring of fancy and of feeling with which the Scriptures glow, and by which they possess themselves not only of the mind, but the heart and soul of man. Oh, thus may our religion appear, creating the whole human race anew in the image of the Creator!"

The Rajah, as was expected, found in the Unitarians of London very warm friends. He became very intimate with some families, such as, the Estlins, the Carpenters, and the Foxes. He attended the Unitarian churches in and near London, and twice attended their anniversary meetings. But he never identified himself thoroughly with them. He also wished to hear other preachers who were well known for their scholarship or theological knowledge. He became very fond of listening to the Rev. Dr. Kenny of the Established Church at St. Olave's, Southwark, and called him his parish priest. He liked the preacher for "his benignity, charity, liberality to the creeds of others, and honesty

in the great political struggle for Reform." His catholicity did not allow him to shut his eyes to the greatness wherever it could be seen. He was always anxious to receive whatever would ennoble his mind and thought. He was guided in his conduct by reason, and respect for truth.

The impression that the Rajah created was phenomenal. He was invited by all parties and had scarcely a free day. In a letter to the Rev. Fox he wrote he would be more happy to visit him in his cottage than to visit a palace, but he was engaged for dinner every day till the 19th June, 31, and he therefore desired to see him at breakfast.

One of the objects of his visit was to represent the case of the Emperor of Delhi, but the Government of India refused to recognise his credentials. In England, however, it was difficult to deny him the honours which he so eminently deserved. The Directors of the East India Company entertained him at a dinner at the City of London Tavern on July 6, 1831. It was a grand function attended by no less than eighty respectable guests. Both the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Company welcomed the distinguished guests. The Chairman proposed the toast of the evening and in a nice speech complimented the Rajah on the "vast services he had rendered to the Indian community." "Like the bee, which suck the choicest sweets from the flowers of the garden, the Brahman collected from the boundless stores of knowledge, to which from travel and study he had access, the richest intellectual treasures." He expected that the example of the Rajah should encourage other able and influential men of the East to visit England. The Rajah in his reply said: "That day was one to which he had looked forward with the greatest degree of expectation. It rejoiced him to be seated amongst a body of gentlemen who had with such

humanity and kindness carried on the Government of India. He referred to the advantages which India had received by coming under the British rule, and contrasted the condition of things before their advent with the security and peace enjoyed under the Company. He paid his tribute to the services rendered by eminent rulers. He felt most grateful to the various illustrious persons who had filled from time to time the office of Governor-General, to Lords Cornwallis, Wellesley, and Hastings—ay to, Lord William Bentinck, who had laid aside everything like show or ostentation, and exhibited no symptom of arbitrary authority, but, on the contrary, had done all in his power to gain the good opinion of the Natives of India, and so raise them in the scale of nations. He felt proud and grateful at what India was experiencing, and expressed his hope that she would ever enjoy a government equally popular, kind, conciliatory, and humane. It is further reported in the *Asiatic Journal* from which the proceedings quoted above have been taken: "It was rather curious to see the Brahman surrounded by hearty feeders upon turtle and venison and champagne, and touching nothing himself but rice and cold water." The social function held in his honour, however, did not mean that the Company recognised the political status of Rammohun. But the Government of England saw no reason why they should not accord to him the rank and title conferred upon him by the Emperor of Delhi. He received the most cordial attention of the Right Honourable Charles Grant, the President of the Board of Control, who took him to a levee held at the St. James' Palace and presented him to the King on September 7, 1831. He was most graciously received by King William IV and it is recorded in the Court Circular: "The Rajah wore the costume of a Brahman, viz., the turban and kabah. The latter was composed of purple velvet, embroidered in gold."

On the occasion of the Coronation ceremony of King William IV Rammohun was assigned a seat among the ambassadors of other monarchs, and he was also invited by His Majesty to the banquet held on the occasion of the opening of the London Bridge. He had now become familiar with the highest circles of English Society and was acknowledged as the accredited representative of India. He was advised to take up his residence in a splendid house in order to maintain his dignity as an Ambassador. Accordingly he rented Cumberland Terrace, Regent's Park, and stayed there for about three months. But this proved a very costly affair and when it was considered absolutely unnecessary to live in such a fashion he removed to the house of Mr. Hare, brother of David Hare, in Bedford Square, where he lived as long as he was in London. The two brothers of Mr. Hare, and their sister received him very kindly and they attended him till his death.

### **Communications on Indian Affairs.**

One of the chief objects of the Rajah's visit to England was to press for certain important reforms at the time of the renewal of the Charter. He was invited to appear and give evidence before the Select Committee appointed by the House of Commons. Miss Collet says that the Rajah declined this request of the Committee, but wrote out his views on the questions framed by the Committee and submitted to the Board of Control as "Communications" but Miss Mary Carpenter thinks that he was actually examined by the Committee. She writes in the *Last Days in England of Raja Rammohun Roy*:

"His visit to England was at a period peculiarly important. In 1831, 1832, a Committee of the House of Commons was sitting on the affairs of India, and in

1833 a Bill on that subject was introduced into Parliament. Hence his time and thought were continually occupied with the proceedings of the Government, and affording information and advice whenever they were required. Everything else was made subservient to this great object. Frequently was the noble form of the illustrious stranger seen within the precincts of our Houses of Parliament, as those still remember who were there thirty-five years ago."

His communications were printed in the Appendix to the Report of the Committee. In Vol. VIII a side note in page 366 suggests that the Rajah had been examined before a Committee of the House of Commons, as the passage "Evidence before Committee of 1831" implies. The papers communicated by Rammohun concerned various subjects. The following papers were printed in Vol. V of the Report:

1. Revenue System of India—54 questions were put to him, and on 19th August, 1831, he submitted his views on "Revenue System of India, Tenure of Land, Rate of Rent, Title to Land, Improvement of the State of the Cultivators and Inhabitants at large."

2. Judicial System of India—78 questions were put and the answers were submitted on the 19th September, 1831.

3. Additional queries respecting the condition of India were answered on the 28th September.

4. Settlement of Europeans in India—evidence on this subject was submitted on July 14, 1832.

5. Condition of the ryots in India—the evidence on this subject submitted in 1831 appears in the Appendix to the Report of 1833.

These papers were printed in a separate volume along with some other papers which he had published in India before.

Rammohun showed close acquaintance with the administration of India in his communications and evidence, which give us a picture of India as witnessed by an Indian of great ability. He was quite familiar with the intricate problems of revenue settlement and the method of collection. In Bengal, and Behar there existed the Zamindary system, in the ceded and conquered provinces there were Zamindars but there was no fixed assessment. In the Presidency of Madras there was the ryotwari system in which the Government was responsible for its own collection. The Zamindary system had come into existence in the time of the Muhammadans and it was continued under the British. The estates belonging to the Zamindars were in many cases considerable, and very often the Zamindars employed middlemen for the collection of rents. The system was very burdensome to the cultivators who had lost some of their old valuable rights. In the ancient times the cultivators had an absolute right over the land they cultivated, but those rights were trampled upon by the arbitrary government of the later rulers. He put the view very clearly when he said: "From a reference to the laws and histories of the country, I believe that lands in India were individual property in ancient times. The right of property seems, however, to have been violated by the Muhammadan conquerors in practice; and when the British power succeeded that of the Muhammadans, the former naturally adopted and followed up the system which was found to be in force, and they established it both in theory and practice." Here Rammohun stood forth as the champion of the popular rights as against his own class of Zamindars. The tenants were oppressed by the Zamindars and revenue collectors. He describes the condition of the people in the following passages:

"Under both systems (Zamindary and Ryotwary) the condition of the cultivators is very miserable; in the

one, they are placed at the mercy of the Zamindar's avarice and ambition; in the other they are subjected to the exertions and intrigues of the surveyors and other government revenue officers. I deeply compassion both; with this difference in regard to the agricultural peasantry of Bengal that there the landlords have met with indulgence from government in the assessment of their revenue, while no part of this indulgence is extended to the poor cultivators. In an abundant season, when the price of corn is low, the sale of their whole crops is required to meet the demand of the landholder, leaving little or nothing for seed or subsistence to the labourer or his family." He said in another passage that the melancholy condition of the agricultural labourers gave him the greatest pain to allude to it. He was in complete sympathy with the suffering peasantry. The permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis had benefited the Government and the Zamindars, but it has done no good to the cultivators. The landholders and the middlemen appointed for the collection of revenue were men of local influence and stood in the way of affording legal protection to the cultivators. He unsparingly criticised the Zamindars for their neglect of duty and their indolence and extravagance which brought ruin upon them. He suggested several means of improving the condition of the peasants and to improve the revenue administration of the country. He suggested that rent should not be increased on any pretence whatsoever. The rent could be reduced if government could raise a sufficient revenue by means of duties or reduce their establishments in the revenue department. In the paper on the Revenue System which he submitted along with the answers to the queries he proposed that the establishment might be reduced by appointing competent Indians as Collectors. Such appointments would not only reduce the expenditure but would "raise



the character of the natives and render them attached to the existing government and active in the discharge of their public duties, knowing that under such a system the faithful and industrious native servant would receive the merit and ultimately the full reward of his services; whereas under the present system the credit or discredit is attributed to the European head of the department; while the natives who are the real managers of the business are entirely overlooked and neglected, and consequently they seem most of them to be rendered quite indifferent to anything but their own temporary interest." Rammohun thus looked far ahead of his times and suggested measures not only for the improvement of the condition of the ryots but for the better government of India. The system then in existence was very unsatisfactory as the Collectors were in need of aid of the Indian subordinates who did not receive good salaries to be above corruption. He pressed for the separation of judicial duties from the executive and proposed that collectors should not by any means be armed with magisterial powers. To ensure justice to the people any charge against the revenue officers should be at once investigated by the judicial courts. The judge or magistrate in each district should be directed to make a tour of the district once in the year, say in winter, to see that the regulations regarding the protection of the peasantry were carried into effect and that the collector should be required to prepare a general register of all the cultivators, containing their names, their respective portions of land and respective rents as permanently fixed according to the system proposed. These reforms have not been still carried out. There is no regular rent roll in the permanently settled estates, and the Collectors have to perform magisterial duties. The Indianisation of services has not yet been conceded inspite of definite promises on several occasions. The administration is a very costly

machinery which could have been made more efficient and cheap if the proposal of Rammohun had been carried.

While in India he had supported the proposal of allowing Europeans of means and character to settle in India. In his evidence before the Select Committee he reiterated those proposals. He thought that such settlement, subject to safeguards, would greatly improve the resources of the country, and also the condition of the native inhabitants by showing them superior methods of cultivation, and the proper mode of treating their labourers and dependants. He, however, did not support the idea of admitting Europeans of all descriptions, for the common Europeans were often disposed to annoy the native inhabitants. He hoped that the settlement of European capitalists in India would stop the drainage and improve the resources of India. We do not see many Europeans who have invested their capital in India to identify themselves with the Indians. There is one case of a good Scotchman after retiring from his business paying attention to the improvement of agriculture and the condition of the cultivators and labourers. The big planters are absentee landlords in most cases and they have done very little to deserve the title of benevolent landlords. The expectation of Rammohun, we do not think, was well placed. The public opinion in India was against the proposal of colonisation, as they used to call it. But the motive of Rammohun was certainly very noble. The example of Sir Daniel Hamilton in the Sunderbuns ought to be imitated by other landlords. At least his case proves the thesis of Rammohun.

His views on the Judicial System were also very comprehensive. The existing system was defective as the number of judges and magistrates were not

sufficient, and they were not adequately qualified to discharge their duties as business was carried on in foreign language (Persian) and there did not exist a proper code of laws to guide them. In reply to the query as to the mode of removing several defects he said: "As European judges in India are not generally expected to discharge judicial duties satisfactorily, independent of native assistance, from not possessing a thorough knowledge of the languages, manners, customs, habits, and practices of the people, and as the natives who possess this knowledge have been long accustomed to subordination and indifferent treatment, and consequently have not the power of commanding respect from others, unless joined by Europeans, the only remedy which exists, is to combine the knowledge and experience of the native with the dignity and firmness of the European. This principle has been virtually acted upon and reduced to practice since 1793, though in an imperfect manner, in the constitution of the courts of circuit, in which the Mufti (native assessor) has voice with the judge in the decision of every cause, having a seat with him on the bench. This arrangement has tolerably well answered the purpose of the Government which has not been able to devise a better system in a matter of such importance as the decision of questions of life and death, during the space of forty years though it has been continually altering the systems in other branches. It is my humble opinion, therefore, that the appointment of such native assessors should be reduced to a regular system in the native courts. They should be appointed by government for life, at the recommendation of the Sudder Dewany Adawlut, which should select them carefully, with a view to their character and qualifications and allow them to hold their situations during life and good behaviour on a salary of Rs. 300 to Rs. 400 per mensem. They should be responsible to the government as well

as to the public for their decisions, in the same manner as the European judges, and correspond directly with the judicial secretary. A casting vote should be allowed to the European judges, in appointing the native officers, in case of difference of opinion: the native assessor, however, having a right to record his dissent."

He advocated the introduction of English as the court language in place of Persian and the trial by jury. The judicial officers of lower rank should be stationed in such a way that the suitors may not have to travel long distance to seek justice. He suggested many important details regarding the administration of justice. He insisted upon the Panchayet system under the direction of a European judge. He protested against the appointment of Revenue Commissioners as judges of appeal and suggested several methods of reducing delay in the courts. The most important contribution of Rammohun was the proposal of codifying criminal law. "A code of criminal law for India" he said "should be founded as far as possible on those principles which are common to and acknowledged by all the different sects and tribes inhabiting the country. It ought to be simple in its principles, clear in its arrangement, and precise in its definitions; so that it may be established as a standard of criminal justice in itself, and not stand in need of explanation by a reference to any other book of authority, either Moham-medan or Christian. It is a subject of general complaint that persons of a certain high rank, however profligate some of them may be, are, from political considerations, exempted from the jurisdiction or control of the courts of law. To remedy this inconvenience, in the proposed code, so as to give general satisfaction, without disregarding the political distinctions hitherto observed, it may perhaps be expedient for government to order such persons to be tried by a special commission, composed of three or

more persons of the same rank. This very regulation when once known to them, would, in all probability, deter them from committing any very gross act of tyranny or outrage upon their dependants or others."

He suggested that the code might be drawn up by persons thoroughly acquainted with Mohammedan and Hindu law, as well as the general principles of British law. He also proposed the codification of civil law on similar principles. The law of inheritance should remain as at present with modifications peculiar to the different sects but he thought that by the diffusion of intelligence the whole community might be prepared to adopt one uniform system. He recommended that before a law was promulgated by the Government the Bill should be circulated to the judicial officers and the leading men of the country, and that there should be a standing committee of the House of Commons to take the regulations and the minutes of different parties into consideration. "The attention thus shown by the Government at home and abroad, to the feelings and interests of the Zamindars, and merchants, as principal members of the community, though it would not confer upon them any political power, would give them an interest in the government, and inspire them with greater attachment to it, and also the whole community, as being under the influence, and in general receiving its opinions from them." In the circumstances of India in those days he did not propose the introduction of representative government but he felt the necessity of consulting public opinion before any law was enacted. The standard of justice was the common good. In this he followed the arguments of Bentham. He strongly advocated the admission of the Indians to higher appointments. "It will not be very difficult" he said "with proper management to find qualified persons amongst the natives for any duty that may be assigned to them."

His answers to the additional queries regarding the condition of India were of a more general nature, and in them he showed a breadth of vision and power of discrimination which marked him out as an able statesman. His opinion about the character of his countrymen was as high as could be: "From a careful survey and observation of the people and inhabitants of various parts of the country, and in every condition of life, I am of opinion that the peasants or villagers who *reside at a distance from large towns and head stations and courts of law* are as innocent, temperate and moral in their conduct as the people of any country whatsoever; and the farther I proceed towards the North and West, the greater the honesty, simplicity and independence of character I meet with." The Indians, he said, have the same capability of improvement as any other civilized people. His analysis of the attitude of the people to the Government was quite accurate when he said: "The peasantry and villagers in the interior are quite ignorant of, and indifferent about either the former or the present government, and attribute the protection they may enjoy or oppression they may suffer to the conduct of the public officers immediately presiding over them. But men of aspiring character and members of such ancient families as are very much reduced by the present system, consider it derogatory to accept of the trifling public situations which natives are allowed to hold under the British Government, and are decidedly disaffected to it. Many of those, however, who engage prosperously in commerce, and of those who are secured in the peaceful possession of their estates by the permanent settlement, and such as have sufficient intelligence to foresee the probability of future improvement which presents itself under the British rulers, are not only reconciled to it, but really view it as a blessing to the country."

He however gave a warning and said: "But I

have no hesitation in stating, with reference to the general feeling of the more intelligent part of the Native community, that the only course of policy which can ensure their attachment to any form of Government, would be that of making them eligible to gradual promotion, according to their respective abilities and merits, to situations of trust and respectability in the state."

Rammohun thought that if the advantages of permanent settlement were extended to the ryots, the farmers and labourers in every part of the country, they would be an asset to the government. They would defend the country as a strong militia and thereby the cost of maintaining a numerous standing army might be reduced. "This consideration is of great importance" said the Rajah, "in respect to the natives of the upper and western provinces, who are distinguished for their superior bravery, and form the greater part of the British Indian army. If this race of men, who are by no means deficient in feelings of personal honour and regard for family respectability, were assured that their rights in the soil were indefeasible so long as the British power should endure, they would from gratitude and self-respect at all times be ready to devote their lives and property in its defence. The saving that might be effected by this liberal and generous policy, through the substituting of a militia force for the great part of the present standing army, would be much greater than any gain that could be realized by any system of increasing land revenue that human ingenuity could devise. How applicable to this case is the following line of the Persian sage (Sadi): 'Be on friendly terms with thy subjects, and rest easy about the warfare of thine enemies; for to an upright prince his people is an army.' "

The labours of Rammohun in this connection have not been thoroughly appraised by his countrymen. They deserve very careful study in view of the various

problems now engaging the attention of the Government and the people. "In the improvements which I have ventured to suggest" said Rammohun, "I have kept in view equally the interests of the governors and the governed; and without losing sight of a just regard to economy, I have been actuated by a desire to see the administration of justice in India placed on a solid and permanent foundation." Rammohun framed his suggestions by keeping the actual state of things before him. He knew the country well enough and therefore he could not indulge in vague dreams. If the suggestions he made had been accepted India would have been spared many of her troubles. Dr. Lant Carpenter in his memoir wrote: "His labours for his country had, however, a much wider scope. He took an intense interest in whatever contributed, or appeared to him likely to contribute, to its welfare; and his communications to our Legislature show with what closeness of observation, soundness of judgment, and comprehensiveness of views, he had considered the various circumstances which interfered with its improvement or which, on the other hand tended to promote it. They show him to be at once the philosopher and patriot. They are full of practical wisdom; and there is reason to believe that they were highly valued by our Government, and that they aided in the formation of the new system by which the well-being of our vast dependencies in India must be so greatly affected for good or for ill;—a system which it requires little acquaintance with the causes of the welfare of nations to perceive, must, after the transition is fully made, essentially promote all the sources of prosperity to that immense population whom our nation is bound by every consideration of justice, as well as of philanthropy and wise policy, to raise and enlighten."

The students of history know how far the recommendations of the Rajah were accepted by the British



Parliament. The Charter Act embodied some of the ideas; and the Indians were given a position which had been denied before. They were admitted to a larger share in the administration, and the Europeans were granted the right of unrestricted entrance. But in vital points the equality promised is being still denied, and the drainage of India's money which Rammohun was anxious to stop is still going on.

### **Affairs of the Emperor of Delhi.**

One of the objects, in fact the most important object, of Rammohun's visit to England was the promotion of the interests of Akbar II, the Emperor of Delhi. According to a treaty between his father Shah Alum II and Lord Wellesley in 1805 certain mahals to the west of the Jumna were assigned to the Emperor, and the management of these mahals was vested in the Resident of Delhi. It was stipulated that the Emperor would draw a minimum allowance per month in lieu of the revenue of the assigned mahals. Since the agreement thus made the income of the mahals considerably increased and the Emperor claimed that his allowance should be increased accordingly. His representations to the local government were unheeded and in his helplessness the Emperor thought of sending an Agent to England. For this purpose his Minister Raja Sohan Lal recommended Rammohun Roy, who was long contemplating a visit to England. In order to add to the dignity of his envoy the Emperor conferred upon Rammohun the title of Rajah. The Government, however, refused to acknowledge his office or the title, so Rammohun had to proceed to England as a private individual. The Government of England was more generous and accorded to Rammohun the honour of an Ambassador of a crowned ruler. He took with him a letter addressed by the Emperor to the King. It was

composed by Rammohun himself both in English and Persian. The letter has been recently unearthed by Mr. Brajendranath Banerji. It is a well-reasoned document and concludes with a personal appeal to the King:—

“If I had any doubt of the justice of my claims, I might still rest them on an appeal to your Majesty’s known generosity. I might remind your Majesty of the time when my ancestors ruled supreme over these countries, where their wretched descendant and the sole representative of their dynasty is compelled to drag on a dependant existence in a dilapidated palace, exposed to the contempt or receiving the sympathy of the different classes of society, both Europeans and Asiatics, who resort to Delhi, with means utterly inadequate to support the dignity even of a nominal sovereignty or to afford a scanty subsistence to the numerous branches of his family who look to him as their only stay. But I will not resort to such a plea. I will not condescend to accept, and your Majesty will disdain to confer, as a favour, that which is due as a right. I rest my cause on your Majesty’s high-minded sense of honour and justice. I cannot permit myself to suppose that your Majesty will lend a deaf ear to my complaints. I address by this letter not only your Majesty but the world at large, and I anticipate the plaudits which present and future ages will bestow on your Majesty’s benevolent and enlightened sympathy with the unworthy representative of the once great and illustrious, though now fallen, House of Taimur.”

Shortly after his arrival in England Rammohun sought the opportunity of doing his duty to the Emperor. In a letter to the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the East India Company he stated fully the case of the Emperor. (June 25, 1831). In the letter he wrote:

“I have the honour to acquaint you that one of the principal objects of my visiting England is to lay before

the British authorities if found necessary, a representation with which I am charged from his Majesty the King of Delhi, and more specially a letter from His Majesty to the King of England, which letter it will be my duty to take an early opportunity of presenting in the event of the appeal which I am induced in the first instance to make to the Hon'ble Court of Directors not being attended with success."

He wrote to them that he possessed full and unlimited powers to negotiate and settle the final terms. He sent another letter on the 6th September. But the Directors did not want to settle the terms with him. They desired that the final terms should be settled with the local government. Rammohun in the meantime succeeded in interesting Sir Charles Grant, the President of the Board of Control, and it was through his kind offices that he was allotted a seat among the Ambassadors on the occasion of the coronation of the King (September 7, 1831). Sir Charles took up the case of the Emperor and induced the Directors to increase the stipend of the Emperor to Rs. 15 lakhs a year. But the Directors played a clever trick when they communicated their decision to the Emperor through the Governor-General, and not through the Emperor's representative in England, Rajah Rammohun Roy. This attempt to deprive Rammohun of his position is to be greatly regretted. The Emperor in the beginning did not like to consider the terms till he had heard from his envoy in England. The subject had remained undecided for a considerable time, as it was under the consideration of the Board of Control and the Court of Directors. The decision of the Court was communicated by the local government in July, 1833. The Emperor had to accept the terms on account of the premature death of Rammohun. He got his allowance increased by Rs. 3 lakhs through the efforts of Rammohun although the Directors of the Company were not prepared to

acknowledge him as his envoy. On the death of the Rajah his son Radhaprosad Roy went to Delhi to obtain the remuneration for the services rendered by his father. According to his agreement with Rammohun the Emperor was willing to grant a monthly allowance of Rs. 1,875 but the Government stood in the way. Rammohun exhausted his resources in England in trying to live, in keeping with the dignity conferred upon him by the Emperor, and in fact one of the chief causes of his fatal malady was the financial trouble to which he was now subjected. But the Government did not allow the Emperor to redeem his promise or to maintain the family of the man who practically sacrificed himself in the cause of the Emperor.

### Visit to France.

Rammohun had long cherished hopes of visiting France. He was full of enthusiasm for the liberal principles for which the French fought. Even when lamed by accident he went to salute the tri-coloured flag of the French vessel which passed them near the Cape. The people in France also have heard with admiration of the talents of the Oriental savant and his contributions to the good of humanity. The overthrow of the Bourbon autocracy was a source of great joy to him, and soon after his arrival in England he made preparations for a visit to that country. He took active steps for the purpose towards the end of 1831. But he was told that he could not visit that country without obtaining a passport. On the 22nd December he wrote a letter to the Secretary to the Board of Control to help him in the matter. He then sent a representation to the Foreign Minister of France through the Board. This interesting letter has been brought out recently through the industry of Mr. Brajendranath Banerji, and published in the *Modern Review* of October, 1928. The letter is

important as it gives the ideas of Rammohun regarding international relations. He suggested an organisation like the League of Nations. He greatly resented restrictions of movement of people from one country to another and expressed his desire for their removal. The letter is reproduced here to show his breadth of vision :

“Sir,

You may be surprised at receiving a letter from a foreigner, the native of a country situated many thousand miles from France, and I assuredly would not now have trespassed on your attention, were I not induced by a sense of what I consider due to myself and by the respect I feel towards a country standing in the foremost rank of free and civilized nations.

“For twelve years past I have entertained a wish (as noticed, I think, in several French and English periodicals) to visit a country so favoured by nature and so richly adorned by the cultivation of arts and sciences, and above all blessed by the possession of a free constitution. After surmounting many difficulties interposed by religious and national distinctions and other circumstances, I am at last opposite your coast, where, however, I am informed that I must not place my feet on your territory unless I previously solicit and obtain an express permission for my entrance from the Ambassador or Minister of France in England.

“Such a regulation is quite unknown even among the nations of Asia (though extremely hostile to each other from religious prejudices and political dissensions), with the exception of China, a country noted for its extreme jealousy of foreigners and apprehensions of the introduction of new customs and ideas. I am, therefore, quite at a loss to conceive how it should exist

among a people so famed as the French are for courtesy and liberality in all other matters.

"It is now generally admitted that not religion only but unbiassed common sense as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which the numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches. Hence enlightened men in all countries must feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible all impediments to it in order to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race.

"It may perhaps be urged that during the existence of war and hostile feelings between any two nations (arising probably from their not understanding their real interests), policy requires of them to adopt these precautions against each other. This, however, only applies to a state of warfare. If France, therefore, were at war with surrounding nations or regarded their people as dangerous, the motive for such an extraordinary precaution might have been conceived.

"But as a general peace has existed in Europe for many years, and there is more particularly so harmonious an understanding between the people of France and England and even between their present Governments, I am utterly at a loss to discover the cause of a regulation which manifests, to say the least, a want of cordiality and confidence on the part of France.

"Even during peace the following excuses might perhaps be offered for the continuance of such restrictions, though in my humble opinion they cannot stand a fair examination.

"*Firstly:* If it be said that persons of bad character should not be allowed to enter France: still

it might, I presume, be answered that the granting of passports by the French Ambassador here is not usually founded on certificates of character or investigation into the conduct of individuals. Therefore, it does not provide a remedy for that proposed evil.

*“Secondly:* If it be intended to prevent felons escaping from justice: this case seems well-provided for by the treaties between different nations for the surrender of all criminals.

*“Thirdly.* If it be meant to obstruct the flight of debtors from their creditors: in this respect likewise it appears superfluous, as the bankrupt laws themselves after a short imprisonment set the debtor free even in his own country; therefore, voluntary exile from his own country would be, I conceive, a greater punishment.

*“Fourthly:* If it be intended to apply to political matters, it is in the first place not applicable to my case. But on general grounds I beg to observe that it appears to me the ends of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political difference between two countries to a Congress composed of an equal number from the Parliament of each; the decision of the majority to be acquiesced in by both nations and the chairman to be chosen by each nation alternately, for one year, and the place of meeting to be one year within the limits of one country and next within those of the other; such as at Dover and Calais for England and France.

*“By such a Congress all matters of difference, whether political or commercial, affecting the natives of any two civilized countries with constitutional governments, might be settled amicably and justly to the satisfaction of both and profound peace and friendly feelings might be preserved between them from generation to generation.*

"I do not dwell on the inconvenience which the system of passports imposes in urgent matters of business and in cases of domestic affliction. But I may be permitted to observe that the mere circumstance of applying for a passport seems a tacit admission that the character of the applicant stands in need of such a certificate or testimonial before he can be permitted to pass unquestioned. Therefore, anyone may feel some delicacy in exposing himself to the possibility of a refusal which would lead to an inference unfavourable to his character as a peaceable citizen.

"My desire, however, to visit that country is so great that I shall conform to such conditions as are imposed on me. if the French Government, after taking the subject into consideration, judge it proper and expedient to continue restrictions contrived for a different state of things, but to which they may have become reconciled by long habit; as I should be sorry to set up my opinion against that of the present enlightened Government of France."

The idea of universal peace was a passion with him and he always appealed to the sense of constitutional government. He felt uneasy at any sign of arbitrary rule. The system of passports was extremely unreasonable to him and he therefore thought that the enlightened Government of France would easily remove it. The conception of an international congress to settle the differences between nations has become strong in recent years and as a result of considerable amount of sacrifice the important nations of the world have agreed to refer their differences to the League of Nations. We can easily see how far-seeing was Rammohun and how deep were his thoughts in international matters. Although he belonged to a dependant country his mind always soared very high and he was never afraid of telling things which he considered to be right.



In the autumn of 1832 Rammohun crossed the Channel and went over to France. He remained there only a few months returning to England in January 1833. From a letter written by Miss Aikin we find that he was in Paris before October 15, 1832, and from a letter written by Rammohun himself to Mr. Woodford of Brighton that he was back to London before the end of January, 1833. During this short stay in France he met with cordial reception from the French people. We are told that he was introduced to Emperor Louis Philippe and had the honour of dining with him more than once. There is a story that he took nothing but fruits and vegetables while dining with the Emperor who took great interest in his guest. The reputation of Rammohun had reached Paris long before this, and he had the rare distinction of receiving from the Societe Asiatique of Paris a Diploma of Honorary Membership of that learned body. On his arrival in that city men of all classes, literary and political, came forward with their offer of hospitality to this distinguished guest. He had the desire of visiting other countries such as Italy and Austria, but as he was not familiar with their languages and his knowledge of French was not very wide he came back to England within a few months. He writes in one of his letters that he was receiving lessons in French from a French gentleman who accompanied him to London.

While in Paris he met the French scholar M. Garcin de Tassy who in the Appendix to his book *Rudiments de la Langue Hindustani* published one letter from Rammohun in Hindustani language.

### Activities in London.

Since his return from Paris Rammohun found himself involved in too many engagements. The affairs of the Emperor of Delhi were still pending, the East India

Bill was on the anvil, the Appeal against the Sati was before the Privy Council. He was feeling the strain and desired to go to Bristol for rest. But the urgent business in hand afforded him very little leisure. The Directors of the East India Company had agreed to increase the stipend of the Emperor by three lakhs a year, but it was so manœuvred that they balked Rammohun of his share in it. The Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Indian affairs was submitted to Parliament in August 1832, the Directors of the Company considered the Report in March and April of 1833, and approved of the recommendations. The Bill embodying the changes in the constitution was drafted and presented in the House of Commons in June. The important measure in its different stages kept the Indian leader busy. The Appeal against the regulation prohibiting the practice of Sati was heard by the Privy Council and was rejected on July 11, 1833. This was a great relief to the Rajah. In August the East India Bill passed through the final stages and received the Royal assent on the 20th of the month. The Rajah now made preparations for going to Bristol where he was expecting to find some rest. But he had to write to his friends in India about the results of his mission, which kept him fearfully busy. Some of the letters which he wrote to his hostesses in Bristol and to other friends about this time give us some glimpses of the anxieties he had then. The important letters printed in Miss Carpenter's *Last Days of Rammohun Roy* are reproduced here

“48, Bedford Square,

February 7th, 1833.

“Dear Madam,—I had last night great pleasure in receiving your letter of the 28th ultimo, and offer you and Miss Castle my cordial thanks for your kind remembrance of me. I beg to assure you that I am fully sensible of

the kind attention you have shown me, and feel indeed grateful for it. I intended to pay you both a visit while residing in Dover, but I was informed that it was necessary to pass London on my way to Bristol. My health is, thank God, thoroughly re-established. I therefore embrace the opportunity of paying you a visit in the latter end of the month, or any rate by the beginning of next. I will endeavour to bring Mr. Rutt with me, though I am sorry to say that in consequence of my ill health I have not yet the pleasure of seeing him. Pray remember me kindly to Miss Caroline Rutt, and present my best respects to Dr. Carpenter, who truly stands very high in my estimation. I now conclude this with my best regards for you and for Miss Castle, and remain, dear Madam,

Yours most faithfully,

RAMMOHUN ROY.

To Miss Kiddell,

Stapleton Grove, near Bristol."

The letter dated the 14th May, 1833 runs thus:

"During last week I more than once intended to proceed to Bristol to avail myself of your kind invitation. But *important* matters passing here daily have detained me, and may perhaps detain me longer than I expect. I however lose no time in informing you that the influenza has already lost its influence in London, a circumstance which justifies my entertaining a hope of seeing you and your friends in the metropolis within a short time, perhaps by the 25th instant. In the anticipation of the pleasure of being soon introduced to you and your friends, I remain, with my best compliments to Miss Castle and Miss Rutt".

In the post script of the letter he writes again: "I sincerely hope you all have escaped the complaint."

This shows that the influenza that year was of an epidemic type. The ladies evidently came to London as he expected and he took them to Astley's Theatre on June 12, and there are letters indicating that he paid them visits on several occasions. He writes again to Miss Catharine Castle on July 19 to the address of Bristol:

"Dear Madam,—I know not how to express the eager desire I feel to proceed to Bristol to experience your further marks of attention and kindness, and Miss Castle's civil reception and polite conversation. But the sense of my duty to the natives of India has hitherto prevented me from fixing a day for my journey to that town, and has overpowered my feeling and inclination. It is generally believed that the main points respecting India will be settled by Wednesday next, and I therefore entertain a strong hope of visiting you by Friday next. I shall not fail to write to you on Wednesday or perhaps on Tuesday next. I feel gratified at the idea that you find my youngster worthy of your company. Nevertheless I entreat you will exercise your authority over him, that he may benefit himself by your instructions. If you find him refractory pray send him back to London. If not, you may allow him to stay there till I supply his place. With my best wishes for your uninterrupted health and happiness."

In another letter written to Miss Castle on July 24th, he writes: "From my anxiety to proceed to Bristol heavy duties appeared to me light, and difficult tasks had seemed easily manageable. The consequence was that I met with disappointments from time to time, which I felt severely. To-day is the third reading of the India Bill in the House of Commons, after long vexatious debates in the Committee, impeding its progress under different pretensions. After the Bill has passed the Lower House, I will lose no time in ascertaining how it

From the Royal Arms Station Co.  
to Miss Piddie, the Aunt of  
Miss Cooke, Stapleton Grove  
near Bristol —

Dear Madam:

I hope you & your friends  
are not worn from hasty labours — I beg your acceptance  
of the accompanying volume  
containing a series of sermons  
preached by Dr. Pheasant  
which I prize very highly.

I also beg you will  
help me by sending the  
— Pamphlet, — I think

By a friend, acceptable to  
Miss Biddle. Being abroad  
& endeavoring her to write a letter  
I thank for such a trifling  
present, I have refrained  
from sending it to Miss  
Biddle. Had I not been  
engaged to a dinner party  
to-day, I would have made  
an other trial of Miss Platts  
generosity. This afternoon I  
will endeavour to pay you  
a <sup>short</sup> visit tomorrow between the  
hours of 10 & 12 should you  
be at home I remain  
Yours very sincerely  
Rammohun Roy

will stand in the Upper Branch, and will immediately leave London without waiting for the final result. I will proceed to Bristol next week, and on my way to (from?) London I will endeavour to visit my acquaintances at Bath and its vicinity. I deeply regret that I should have been prevented from fulfilling my intention this week, by circumstances over which I had no control."

He writes again to Miss Kiddell on the 16th August:

"I have now the pleasure of informing you that I feel relieved, and will proceed to Stapleton Grove on Thursday next. I beg you will excuse this short letter as I am incessantly engaged in making preparations, particularly in writing letters to India and in different parts of this country."

His friends were numerous and he wrote to Mr. Woodford on the 22nd August, and this is the last letter of the Rajah, to have been preserved. In this letter we find his varied interests and cosmopolitan sympathies with all noble aspirations for freedom:

" 48, Bedford Square,  
August 22nd, 1833.

"My dear sir,—I was glad to hear from Mr. Carey some time ago, that you and Mrs. W. were in good health when he saw you last; and Sir Henry Strachey, whom I had the pleasure of seeing about three weeks ago, has confirmed the same information. He is indeed an extraordinary man; and I feel delighted whenever I have an opportunity of conversing with that philosopher. I have been rather poorly for some days past; I am now getting better, and entertain a hope of proceeding to the country in a few days, when I will endeavour to pay you a visit in Taunton. The reformed Parliament has disappointed the people of England; the ministers may perhaps redeem their pledge during next session. The failure of several mercantile houses in Calcutta has

produced much distrust, both in India and England. The news from Portugal is highly gratifying, though another struggle is still expected. I hope you will oblige me by presenting to Mrs. W. with my best respects, the accompanying copy of a translation, giving an account of the system of religion which prevailed in Central India, at the time of the invasion of that country by Alexander the Great."

Rammohun served under one Mr. Woodford in India, and it seems that this was the same gentleman as Rammohun writes to him of other retired officials such as Sir Henry Strachey. Mr. and Mrs. Woodford were interested in him as was Sir Edward East Hyde, the retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who once invited him to a party in his house. He was very grateful to those Englishmen who had in any way rendered some service to India. At a meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society of London he moved a vote of thanks to Sir Henry Thomas Colebrooke, the great Oriental scholar who was held in universal esteem in India. He said that there was an impression among the Hindus that no European could attain proficiency in Sanskrit, but the translation of the two Hindu treatises on the law of inheritance, the *Dayabhaga* and *Mitakshara* by Sir Henry Colebrooke proved that Europeans could acquire as great proficiency in Sanskrit as the Hindus. He expressed the opinion that the works of Colebrooke would make him immortal. The tribute to the services rendered by the Orientalist was worthy of the mover and the recipient of the honour.

Rammohun occupied so much space in the English society at that time, specially on account of his views regarding Indian problems that a humorous play was published, entitled "Plans for the Government of India—A Drama," and in it a character in the role of a candidate for election to Parliament says: "I



propose, therefore, in the first place that Rajah Rammohun Roy be appointed Governor-General of India; that all the judicial posts be filled by Mahomedans; all the revenue offices be filled by Hindus; and the Police be executed by East Indians or Indo-Britons. The beauty of this plan ladies and gentlemen, consists in this: the Rajah is neither a Hindu, a Mahomedan, nor a Christian, so that he can have no bias towards any part of the population in India; and the rest being antagonistical, that is opposed to each other, they would keep, by their very opposition, the whole machine of Government in steady operation, just as an arch is retained firmly together by contrary pressure on all sides of it." (This was published in the *Asiatic Journal* of January-April, 1832).

### Visit to Bristol.

Early in September Rajah Rammohun Roy accompanied by Miss Hare reached Bristol. He was not keeping good health and was embarrassed on account of the failure of his bankers at Calcutta and London. He applied for loan from the Directors of the East India Company. But the Directors did not agree to accommodate him with a loan on personal security. This made him extremely uncomfortable. To add to his troubles Sandford Arnot who acted as his Secretary and got him entangled in heavy expenditure pressed for payment of arrears of his salary. His friends, the Hare brothers with whom he was putting up in London were very kind to him, but he was very reluctant to receive help from friends. His sons in Calcutta could not send him any money. In a foreign land he taxed himself to the utmost to get rid of these troubles which preyed upon his mind very heavily. In this embarrassed state of mind he accepted the very kind invitation of his

Unitarian friends in Bristol where he expected to find some rest.

The Unitarians of England had since expressed sympathy for his work in India, and they lent him all support in his activities in England. The Rev Dr. Lant Carpenter, Pastor of Lewin's Mead Chapel, had helped him even before he came to England. He made an appeal to his congregation at Bristol, eight years before, in aid of the Unitarian worship in Calcutta, and he found liberal response there. He invited Rammohun to Bristol when he required rest very badly. There was no accommodation in his own house, but his ward, Miss Castle was very ready to offer her house at Stapleton Grove at the disposal of the Indian guest. She was living with her aunt, Miss Kiddell in that spacious house and extended her hospitality with great alacrity. The Rajah was long contemplating a visit to Bristol, but could not avail himself of the invitation till the first week of September, on account of various engagements in London. He had sent his adopted son, Raja Ram, before this along with the two ladies when they visited London. He had first placed the boy under the care of the Rev. D. Davison M.A. and in June, 1833 Miss Kiddell of Stapleton Grove took over the charge of the boy. Besides Miss Hare the Rajah was accompanied by his two Indian servants, Ram Rotun Mukherjee and Ram Harry Dass. On his arrival at Stapleton Grove Rammohun found himself in congenial company. The Rev. Dr. Carpenter used to visit him very often, and the two ladies Miss Kiddell and Miss Castle took good care of his health. He had been in correspondence with Mr. J. B. Estlin, a medical practitioner, long since, and this gentleman was almost in constant attendance upon him.

Rammohun attended the weekly service in Dr. Carpenter's Church, Lewin's Mead Chapel on two Sundays, the 8th and 15th September. On the 16th Rev.

R. B. Aspland made an appeal on behalf of the Manchester New College and the Rajah sent a message through Mr. Estlin that he would send some contribution for the college. But unfortunately he fell ill the next day and did not live to fulfil his promise. Many distinguished ladies and gentlemen of Bristol took the opportunity of forming acquaintance with him. He was entertained at a large party at Stapleton Grove on the 11th September. The Rev John Foster, the well-known essayist, had some strong pre-possession against him, but he says: "My prejudice could not hold out half an hour after being in his company. He was a very pleasing and interesting man; intelligent and largely informed, I need not say—but unaffected, friendly, and, in the best sense of the word polite. I passed two evenings in his company, only, however, as a unit in large parties; the latter time, however, in particular and direct conversation with him, concerning some of the doctrines of the Indian philosophers, the political, civil, and moral state of the Hindus." In these parties he was dragged to the theological controversies, and in the second party in which Mr. Foster observed him in closer quarters he stood for three hours answering questions of all sorts. On the 19th Mr. Estlin found him suffering from fever and he prescribed some medicine for him. His condition became graver and Mr. Estlin called two other doctors, Dr. Prichard and later on Dr. Carrick for advice. On the 23rd it was found that the head was the organ most affected and therefore leeches were applied. On the 26th the condition became very serious, and he would not take any nourishment. An idea could be formed of the anxieties and fears of those who attended him from the private journal of Mr. Estlin, extracts from which have been printed in Mary Carpenter's *Last Days of Rammohun Roy*:

"Thursday, 19th.—I rode over to Stapleton to see my mother, &c. Found the Rajah ill in fever; he saw

me very willingly, and I prescribed for him. Called at Mr. Bright's counting-house to put off going to Ham Green; and at eight the Rajah's carriage came for me. I found him a little better, but still feverish. Mr. John Hare and Miss Hare, with whom Rammohun Roy lived, were there. I slept there.

"Friday, 20th.—The Rajah no better. I came home by two in the Rajah's carriage; went out again to dinner. The Rajah had headache coming on, but it subsided on the effect of medicine. He slept in the evening, but with his eyes much open. On awaking about eleven, I found his extremities very cold and his pulse 130 and weak, with the appearance of collapse. Warm liquids and a little wine, and external warmth, relieved him, but his restlessness, changing from the bed to the sofa on the ground, was very great. I begged to-day he would allow Miss Hare to attend him constantly. He said it would be very improper. I assured him the customs of this country rendered it quite proper, and she was admitted. I had her called up after she had gone to bed, to stay up with the Rajah. He seemed much gratified with my services, and glad for me to sleep here. I felt very anxious about him to-night, and told my mother I should propose Prichard's seeing him to-morrow, if he were not better.

"Saturday, 21st.—Miss Hare sat up with the Rajah, and informed in the night how he went on. I saw him early; his pulse was better, and himself altogether improved; tongue no better. Miss Kiddell proposed Dr. Prichard should see him, to which I cheerfully assented. Went into Bristol; saw some patients at two, and went out to Stapleton with Prichard to dine at five. I did not tell the Rajah of Prichard's visit until he was in the house. The Rajah expressed his satisfaction, and told me afterwards how much Prichard's countenance indicated his talent. Mr. Hare met us here, and highly

approved of Prichard's coming. I went to bed at eleven. Miss Hare sat up again.

"Sunday, 22nd.—The Rajah was very restless till towards morning, when he slept with his eyes much open. Prichard came at half-past eleven; I went in with him, but returned at three. Mr. Hare came out also. In the evening the Rajah was better, and I was in more spirits about him. He said while Prichard, Mr. Hare and I were with him, that if he were to die, he had the satisfaction of knowing he had the best advice in Bristol. Mary and my mother went into meeting in Miss Castle's carriage and returned. Miss Hare's attention to the Rajah is most watchful and unwearied; she has great influence with him, making him take his medicine much better than I could. He is evidently much attached to her, and her regard for him seems quite filial.

"Monday, 23rd.—I rose a little before five. The Rajah had passed a restless night, having only interrupted sleep with his eyes open. He was much oppressed all day, taking but little notice as usually, and yet perfectly collected when roused. I became more apprehensive of the event, but still am inclined to regard his recovery as probable as his death. Miss Hare spoke in the morning of more advice. I urged it also; Mr. Hare, though on his own account did not wish it, considered it proper in the case of so well known and distinguished an individual; and principally on his suggestion Dr. Carrick was called in. He came with Prichard in the evening. The head appearing the organ most affected, leeches were applied. The Rajah was rather better at night. He has expressed to me his gratitude for my attentions, looks at me with great kindness, and constantly presses my hand. I assisted him into a warm bath in the earlier part of the day; he seemed somewhat relieved at night.

"Tuesday, 24th.—Mr. and Miss Hare and young Rajah Ram sat up last night. I left them at eleven; returned to the sick chamber at five a.m. The Rajah's pulse was a little better than it was last night, and altogether he was not worse. Carrick and Prichard came at twelve. During the day more composed and more quiet sleep, but with his eyes open. Towards evening and the night he is always worse.

"Wednesday, 25th.—The Rajah slept a good deal, and was quieter than during my preceding night; pulse 102 and weak; Mr. Hare staid up. When he reported to me, between three and four a.m., the patient's state he expressed alarm at the frequent weakness of the pulse; extremities disposed to be very cold, but easily becoming warm when covered; he spoke very little, but is sensible when roused. I came into Bristol about twelve; went to Stapleton to dinner. The Rajah is still very poorly and weak. A mattress has been placed on the ground for him, where he now lies without changing his situation. He seldom speaks.

"Thursday, 26th.—Mr. Hare sat up during most of last night; he reported to me between three and four a.m. that the Rajah's pulse had sometimes been very weak and rapid, so as to make him feel very solicitous. He was in an imperfect sleep, with eyes open most of the night. Dr. Carrick came at eleven, and before Prichard arrived we were summoned to the room by Miss Hare, and found him with an attack of spasm, with convulsive twitchings of the mouth. These went on more or less for an hour or two, and he seemed not sensible of our visit, though in the morning when I went to him, he smiled at me and squeezed my hand in an affectionate manner. We had his hair cut off, and cold water applied to the head. After the spasms subsided, he appeared to sleep, the eyes still open, pupils small; the left arm and leg paralysed. We settled to have Dr.

Bernard in the evening. I staid here all day, and am getting apprehensive about the event. In the afternoon he became much warmer, and the pulse a little stronger, but spasms came on again about halfpast six. He has swallowed with too great difficulty for many hours to allow of any quantity of nourishment, and he has been but little sensible since the morning, when he gave me his last look of recognition and thankfulness. Dr Bernard could not come—it was useless. Prichard and Carrick left the Rajah in a dying state. Nobody went to bed before twelve. Miss Kiddell was much with the Rajah; Miss Castle occasionally; Miss Hare, Mr. John Hare and Rajah Ram seldom out of the room; my mother looked in now and then.

“Friday, 27th.—The Rajah became worse every few minutes, his breathing more rattling and impeded, his pulse imperceptible. He moved about his right arm constantly, and his left a little a few hours before his death. It was a beautiful moonlight night; on one side of the window, as Mr. Hare, Miss Kiddell and I looked out of it, was the rural midnight scene; on the other this extraordinary man *dying*. I shall never forget the moment. Miss Hare, now hopeless and overcome, could not summon courage to hang over the dying Rajah, as she did while soothing or feeding him ere hope had left her, and remained sobbing in a chair near; young Rajah was generally holding his hand. I doubt if he knew any since morn yesterday. About half-past one, to please Miss Kiddell, as life was fast fading from our admired friend, and nothing but watching the last breath remained for those around, I lay down on my bed with my clothes on. At half past two Mr. Hare came into my room and told me it was all over; Ram Rotun was holding the Rajah’s chin, kneeling by him; Miss Hare, young Rajah, Miss Kiddell, Miss Castle, Ram Harry and one or two servants were there also; his last breath had been drawn at twenty-five minutes past

two a.m. During his last few moments Ram Rotun, who is a Brahmin, on Mr. Hare desiring to observe any custom usual among the Brahmins, said some prayer in Hindostanee (Sanskrit?). When the ladies had retired, we laid the body straight on the mattress, and conversed with the Hindoo servants. About half-past three or four we all left the room, some of the servants sitting up in the adjoining room. I went to bed, but not to much sleep, the event of the night being too distressing. Our breakfast party was a melancholy one. Miss Hare remained in bed. Pugh, marble mason came out with an Italian and took a cast of the Rajah's head and face. Mr. Hare and I went into Bristol, and made arrangements about the examination to-morrow. Dr. Carpenter came out to us in the morning. We were all of us much in the room to-day with the body, which had a beautiful majestic look. The event is a stunning one to us."

In a foreign land away from his kith and kin the great soul of the Rajah quitted the over-wearied body amidst solemn silence surrounded by a few friends he had found there. He went to England with great hopes and expected to return to his country with a new message. He was the first Ambassador of India to England, the first interpreter of the East to the West. The death hallowed all his activities for the benefit of India and humanity. He appeared like a lone star on the firmament of India and disappeared with full glory in the western sky, reminding us all of our life in the eternity. About his last hours Miss Collet writes: "The Rajah seemed to pass much of his waking time in prayer. What special burdens weighed on his mind and pressed out his entreaties, we have no means of knowing. His utterance of the sacred '*Aum*'—one of the last words heard to utter—suggested that at the solitary gate of death as well as in the crowded thoroughfare of life the contemplation of Deity was the chief pre-occupation of his soul."



It is also recorded by Mr. Estlin that he conversed very little during his illness, but was observed to be often engaged in prayer. He had a premonition of his approaching death and told it so to Rajah Ram and those around him. Mr. Estlin had arranged to hold an examination of the body which took place on Saturday and it was found that the brain was inflamed containing some fluid and covered with a kind of purulent effusion: its membrane also adhered to the skull, the result probably of previously existing disease; the thoracic and abdominal viscera were healthy. The case appeared to be one of fever, producing great prostration of the vital powers, and accompanied by inflammation of the brain, which did not exhibit, in their usual degree, the symptoms of that affection.

About the troubles of Rammohun in his last days Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson, the great Sanskrit scholar who had known him in Calcutta, wrote to Ramcomul Sen three months after the event. This is reproduced in Dewan Ramcomul Sen's life by Peary Chand Mitra:

"In a letter I wrote to you I mentioned the death of Rammohun Roy. Since then I have seen Mr. Hare's brother, and had some conversation with him on the subject. Rammohun died of brain-fever: he had grown very stout, and looked full and flushed when I saw him. It was thought he had the liver, and his medical treatment was for that and not for determination to the head. It appears also that mental anxiety contributed to aggravate his complaint. He had become embarrassed for money, and was obliged to borrow of his friends here; in doing which he must have been exposed to much annoyance, as people in England would as soon part with their lives as their money. Then Mr. Sandford Arnot, whom he had employed as his Secretary, importuned him for the payment of large arrears which he called arrears of salary, and threatened Rammohun, if

not paid, to do what he has done since his death,—claim as his own writing all that Rammohun published in England. In short, Rammohun got amongst a low, needy, unprincipled set of people, found out his mistake, I suspect, when too late, which preyed upon his spirit and injured his health. With all his defects, he was no common man, and his country may be proud of him."

### The Last Rites.

How to dispose of the body and where to lay it at rest became a problem with his friends. Mr. Hare made it clear that it was the wish of the Rajah that his body should not be buried among other dead or with Christian rites. Dr. Carpenter says that "the Rajah had repeatedly expressed the wish that in case of his dying in England, a small piece of freehold ground might be purchased for his burying place, and a cottage be built upon it for the gratuitous residence of some respectable poor person, to take charge of it." Miss Castle came to their rescue when she offered a small piece of land in a shrubbery near her lawn, under some fine elms. The offer was thankfully accepted and it was arranged to hold the funeral on the 18th October, at two p.m. Some passages from the reminiscences of Miss Mary Carpenter about the resting place of the Rajah are quoted here as they indicate the feelings of his friends in England:

"We mournfully and in solemn silence laid the sacred remains of the revered Rajah in the peaceful, beautiful spot we had chosen, on the 18th of October, 1833.

"How, but a few weeks before, we had rejoiced at his long-expected visit to us! We had for many years watched his Star in the East, rising in calm solitary grandeur, the herald, we hoped, of a glorious morn to benighted India. We had seen it pass steadfastly on

its heavenly way through the midst of dark clouds, and even through fierce storm of persecution, and finally rise above them."

A special service was held in Lewin Mead's Chapel on the 6th of October in the evening. Dr. Carpenter preached on the occasion. "The Chapel-yard" so goes the description, "was thronged sometime before the service commenced, and not only was every pew in the edifice was densely crowded but seats in the aisles were speedily filled, and the whole vacant space was closely occupied by people standing. Never, before nor since, have I beheld such a crowd in that or in any other place of worship. All who knew my father, or who had heard him preach, will imagine what feeling, what depth of spirituality, was infused into every part of the service. The grand fortieth chapter of Isaiah which he read, had to me a high significance which it had never had before, and to this day I seldom hear it or read it without thinking of the Rajah. The sermon need not be described, as it was printed. The conclusion of it was deeply impressive... .."

"At length all the preparations were made. The Hare brothers had come from London, and those only were invited to assemble at Stapleton Grove who had been personally connected with the Rajah; Miss Castle's guardians and immediate connections, the Messrs. Hare and their niece, who had attended on him in this last illness like a daughter, and young Rajah Ram, his adopted son, with the Brahmin servants; the medical attendants, including Mr. Estlin with his venerable mother and young daughter, Dr. Jerrard, the celebrated John Foster, my father and myself. Soon after noon was the shrine containing the mortal remains of that glorious spirit, slowly and solemnly, in the deepest silence borne down the broad gravel walk, followed by us his mourning friends, who had but lately known

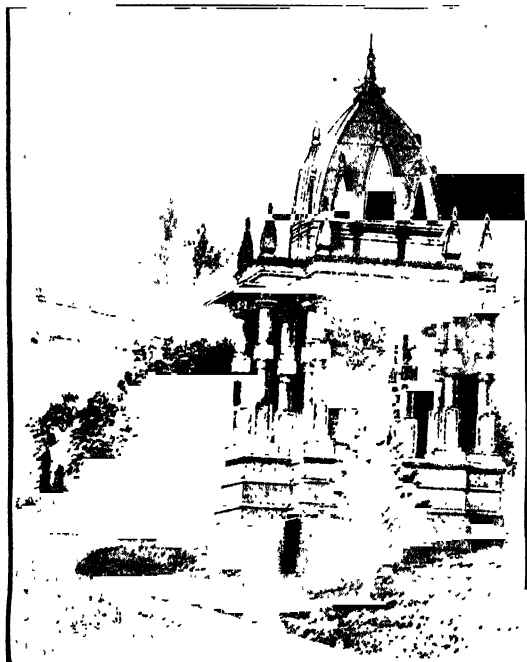
him in earth, but who hoped to meet him in the Father's Mansions above. The bearers wound along a shady walk, which his foot had doubtless often trodden, and there deposited their sacred burden in the appointed resting place. No voice ventured to express the deep thoughts which must have filled every breast. 'Who would have spoken over such a grave?' afterwards said John Foster."



STAPLETON GROVE, BRISTOL,  
where Rammohun breathed his last.

In the quiet spot surrounded by elms the earthly remains of the Rajah were looked after by the ladies at Stapleton Grove. But the proprietary rights of this beautiful house did not remain with the Castle family and the admirers of Rammohun felt that the precious remains should be kept in a more public place and a monument erected over the tomb. Dwarkanath Tagore went to England in 1842 and he was instructed by the people in India "to rescue the grave of that illustrious man from the neglect to which it had been consigned, and to erect over it some memorial which shall at least

serve to direct the steps of future pilgrims from India to England to the place where his remains rest." Dwarkanath secured a spot in the cemetery at Arno's Vale, near Bristol, and had the case containing the coffin



RAMMOHUN'S MEMORIAL  
AT ARNO'S VALE, BRISTOL.

removed to the new resting place on May 29, 1843. A monument in the shape of a Hindu temple was erected as a memorial of this great man. The tomb was carefully repaired in 1872 and a memorial tablet with a suitable inscription placed there. The Arno's Vale has become a place of pilgrimage for Indians who visit England.

## CHAPTER X

### **Rammohun's Personality and Character.**

*"Rammohun was the only person in his time, in the whole world of man, to realize completely the significance of the Modern Age. He knew that the ideal of human civilization does not lie in the isolation of independence, but in the brotherhood of interdependence of individuals as well as of nations in all spheres of thought and activity. He applied this principle of humanity with his extraordinary depth of scholarship and natural gift of intuition, to social, literary and religious affairs, never acknowledging limitations of circumstance, never deviating from his purpose lured by distractions of temporal excitement. His attempt was to establish our peoples on the full consciousness of their cultural personality, to make them comprehend the reality of all that was unique and indestructible in their civilization and simultaneously, to make them approach other civilizations in the spirit of sympathetic co-operation. With this view in his mind he tackled an amazingly wide range of social, cultural, and religious problems of our country, and through a long life spent in unflagging service to the cause of India's cultural reassertion, brought back the pure stream of India's philosophy to the futility of our immobile and unproductive national existence. In social ethics he was an uncompromising interpreter of the truths of human relationship, tireless in his crusade against social wrongs and superstition, generous in his co-operation with any reformer, both of this country and of outside, who came to our aid in a genuine spirit of comradeship. Unsparingly he devoted himself to the*

*task of rescuing from the debris of India's decadence the true products of its civilization, and to make our people build on them, as the basis, the superstructure of an international culture. Deeply versed in Sanscrit, he revived classical studies, and while he imbued the Bengali literature and language with the rich atmosphere of our classical period, he opened its doors wide to the Spirit of the Age, offering access to new words from other languages, and to new ideas. To every sphere of our national existence he brought the sagacity of a comprehensive vision, the spirit of self-manifestation of the unique in the light of the universal."*

—Tagore.

The estimate thus formed of the services rendered by Rammohun is but a faint appreciation of the maker of Modern India. His worth has not yet been fully recognised by his own countrymen. His labours in the different spheres, social, religious, political and cultural, have not as yet come to fruition. He set up the ideals for which the later generations ought to have striven with greater vigour and enthusiasm. Miss Collet wrote: "Rammohun thus presents a most instructive and inspiring study for the New India of which he is the type and pioneer. He offers to the new democracy of the West a scarcely less valuable index of what our greatest Eastern dependency may yet become under the Imperial sway of the British commonalty. There can be little doubt that, whatever future the destinies may have in store for India, that future will be largely shaped by the life and work of Rammohun Roy. And not the future of India alone. We stand on the eve of an unprecedented intermingling of East and West. The European and the Asiatic streams of human development, which have often tinged each other before, are now approaching a confluence which bids fair to form the one ocean-river of the collective progress of

mankind. In the presence of that greater Eastern Question,—with its infinite ramifications, industrial, political, moral and religious,—the international problems of the passing hour, even the gravest of them, seem dwarfed into parochial pettiness. The nearing dawn of those unmeasured possibilities only throws into clearer prominence the figure of the man whose life story we have told. He was, if not the prophetic type, at least the precursive hint, of the change that is to come."

The wave of reaction that is passing across India at the present time makes one despair of the future which Rammohun envisaged. But underneath the foam and froth a deep current of mutual understanding and international brotherhood is running. Attempts are made to establish international fellowships and to strengthen the cord of friendship between men of different faiths. The yearning of man to attain unity in the midst of diversity may be heard through the din of conflict and rivalry. There we see the spirit of Rammohun working. He was born far in advance of his age, and held aloft the torch of new light with a courage rarely to be seen amongst us at present. His personality impressed his contemporaries as that of an extraordinary man. An American physician in London, Dr. Boott wrote of the Rajah shortly after his death in a letter to Mr. Estlin: "To me he stood alone in single majesty of, I had almost said, perfect humanity. No one in past history or in present time, ever came before my judgment clothed in such wisdom, grace and humility. I knew of no tendency even to error." He further writes in the same letter: "When I think that I shall see him no more; that the beauty of his countenance, the picturesqueness of his eastern costume, the kind reception, the noble example of virtues I never felt at least so powerfully in others, the hope I had entertained of his future usefulness, the certainty I had of his present



happiness, and all his enlarged affections,—when I think that these have passed away forever of my brief existence, I feel a sorrow such as I never felt before, and one which can only find consolation in that pure religion of which he was so able a defender. His loss has given tenfold value in my mind to his writings, and I have studied them with subdued feeling since his death, and risen from their perusal with a more confirmed conviction of his having been unequalled in past or present time.”

In India and abroad people were deeply impressed by his personality and dignified appearance. He possessed a sound mind in a strong body. There was something in him which attracted others and unarmed all opposition. While in India he was described by the Abbe Gregoire in an article in The “*Monthly Repository*” as “tall and robust; his regular features and habitually grave countenance assume a most pleasing appearance when he is animated. He appears to have a slight disposition to melancholy.” Rammohun was then forty years old. A sketch of the Rajah appeared in the *Court Journal*, shortly after his death. It was from the pen of Robert Montgomery Martin who was associated with him in India. Mr. Martin wrote: “The Rajah, in the outer man, was cast in nature’s finest mould: his figure was manly and robust: his carriage was dignified: the forehead towering, expansive and commanding; the eye dark, restless, full of brightness and animation, yet liquid and benevolent, and frequently glistening with a tear when affected by the deeper sensibility of the heart: the nose of Roman form and proportions: lips full and indicative of independence; the whole feature deeply expressive, with a smile of soft and peculiar fascination which won irresistibly the suffrages to whom it was addressed. His manners were characterized by suavity blended with dignity, verging towards either point according to the company in which he might be placed.

To ladies his politeness was marked by the most delicate manner, and his felicitous mode of paying them a compliment gained him very many admirers among the high-born beauties of Britain. In conversation with individuals of every rank and of various nations and professions, he passed with the utmost care from one language to another, suiting his remarks to each and all in excellent taste, and commanding the astonishment and respect of his hearers."

A similar portrait was drawn by Mr. Sutherland in an article in the *Indian Gazette* of February 18, 1834:

Rammohun surpassed the generality of his countrymen in his personal appearance almost as much as in his mental powers. In his prime of manhood his figure was beyond the common height, and was stout and muscular in proportion. His countenance was an expression of blended dignity and benevolence that charmed at first sight and put his visitors at ease, while it checked an irreverent familiarity. In the latter part of his life, which closed in his sixtieth year, his manly figure began to droop, perhaps not so much from age as the weight of thought and the toil of study. But his fine dark eye, though it lost something of its fire, retained its intelligence and amenity to the last."

A portrait of the Rajah drawn by H. P. Briggs, R.A. was brought to Bristol for exhibition. Miss Castle desired that Bristol should preserve a likeness of the Rajah and therefore she bought it and presented it to the Bristol Philosophical Institution. It is now preserved in the Bristol Museum. In referring to this portrait the *Asiatic Journal* wrote: "The person of Rammohun Roy was a very fine one. He was nearly six feet high; his limbs were robust and well-proportioned, though latterly, either through age or increase of bulk, he appeared rather unwieldy and inactive. His face was beautiful;

the features large and manly, the forehead lofty and expanded, the eyes dark and animated, the nose finely curved and of due proportion, the lips full, and the general expression of the countenance that of intelligence and benignity. The best portrait of him extant, is full-sized one by Briggs. It is a good picture, as well as an admirable likeness." Dr. Lant Carpenter agreed with the views of the *Journal* and wrote: "It gives, indeed, the impression of a less bulky person than the Rajah's was, in at least the later part of life; and the mouth does not satisfy me in its form or its expression: but the rest of the countenance, the attitude of figure, and the hands—beautifully significant, as well as masterly painted—give that expression to the whole which those who contemplate Rammohun Roy as the Hindu sage and reformer would most desire. It is the expression of devout, reflecting, benignant philanthropy, hopeful, yet with a tinge of pensive solicitude; looking onward, and upward, and contemplating the gleams of truth and righteousness breaking forth to enlighten and to bless his country."

His personal features were in keeping with his virtues. He maintained his health by good food and regular exercise. We are told that he was an uncommon eater, he could take the meat of a full goat, drink in a day twelve seers of milk, eat up fifty mangoes and a large number of cocoanuts. He possessed extraordinary strength and proportionate courage and strength of mind. His mental powers were as alert and vigorous as his physical powers. It is on account of these endowments that he could stand against all opposition in his struggle for the redress of the injustice and inhumanities perpetrated upon women. When his life was threatened he used to say: "The people of Calcutta would kill me? What do they take?" He used to walk on the streets of Calcutta for his exercise and used to play on the swing. He had a suppleness of body combined with great

vigour, and those who came across him were impressed by his commanding personality.

### **Social Virtues.**

Rammohun had all the features of a noble man. His magnetic personality inspired love and admiration. The wealthy and influential men in Calcutta sought his company, the poor and the needy felt relieved at his sight and the common people found in him a champion of their just rights. An incident will shew how he felt for the poor. He had established a market in his village. His son Radhaposad used to collect some toll from the vendors, which they felt to be very irksome. One day when Rammohun was in the village the poor vendors made a representation to him. He at once sent for Radhaposad who could not satisfy him about this imposition. He was very sorry that these poor people who earned their livelihood by selling small articles should be so tyrannised over. Since that day the toll was stopped. There is another story that one day he was walking on the streets in his usual dress, choga and chapkan, when he found a vegetable-seller unable to lift his heavy load and was waiting for some one to help him. Seeing his plight Rammohun came at once to his help. He was full of sympathy for the poor. This explains why he championed the cause of the ryots, being a landlord himself. He had a broad heart and his sympathies were not confined to any one country or community. He shed his tears for the sufferings of man, wherever he might be. He devoted all his energies for the emancipation of man from the thralldom of ages. He rejoiced when any people could overthrow tyranny; he grieved when autocracy crushed the popular rights. He always associated himself with the cause of liberty, whether it be in India or Ireland, Naples or Portugal, England or France. In his boundless sympathies he identified himself with the suffering humanity. After

the downfall of Napoleon there came a wave of reaction under the influence of the Austrian Minister Metternich. But this caused a series of revolutions in favour of constitutional government. There was a rising in Naples in 1820, the Bourbon King agreeing to set up a constitution. But the other powers interfered and with the help of Austria autocracy was restored. This news of the failure of the nationalists to maintain their position upset Rammohun. He lay prostrate with grief, and declined to join any social functions. He wrote a letter to James Silk Buckingham, the editor of the *Calcutta Journal*, which shows his feelings at the time:

"My dear sir,—A disagreeable circumstance will oblige me to be out the whole of this afternoon, and as I shall probably on my return home feel so much fatigued as to be unfit for your company, I am afraid I must be under the necessity of denying myself the pleasure of your society this evening; more especially as my mind is depressed by the late news from Europe. I would force myself to wait on you to-night, as I proposed to do, were I not convinced of your willingness to make allowance for unexpected circumstances.

From the late unhappy news, I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy.

Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be, ultimately successful.

Adieu, and believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

RAMMOHUN ROY."

August 11th, 1821.

As he was pained at the news of the defeat of the Neapolitans he rejoiced at the successful rising of the Portuguese and the Spaniards. There was a rising in the Isla de Leon in 1821 and King Ferdinand VII was forced to concede a liberal constitution. Rammohun became so happy that he gave a public dinner in the Town Hall of Calcutta in honour of that event. He rejoiced with the French when they overthrew the rule of Charles X in 1830. He watched with intense anxiety the progress of the Reform Bill in England. Wherever he went he talked of the Bill. After the second reading of the Bill in 1832 he wrote to Mrs. Woodford: "The struggles are not merely between reformers and anti-reformers, but between liberty and tyranny throughout the world; between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong. But from a reflection on the past events of history, we clearly perceive that liberal principles in politics and religion have been long gradually, but steadily, gaining ground, notwithstanding the opposition and obstinacy of despots and bigots." An ardent lover of freedom he never lost his heart in any good cause.

In England the Rajah became the centre of great attraction. "The extraordinary courteousness and suavity of his general demeanour," writes Miss Carpenter, "and his habitual care to avoid giving unnecessary pain, would have made those who enjoyed his society think of him only as a most delightful and intellectual companion, did not some observation incidentally reveal what were the ever present subjects of his thoughts." He became an object of admiration in every circle. The ladies talked of him and gentlemen courted his company. His movements were reported to America. Miss Lucy Aikin wrote to Dr. Channing in a letter dated Hampstead, June 28, 1831:—"In the intervals of politics we talk of the Christian Brahmin, Rammohun Roy. All accounts agree in representing him as a person of extraordinary merit.

With very great intelligence and ability, he unites a modesty and simplicity which win all hearts. He has a very great command of the language, and seems perfectly well versed in the political state of Europe, and an ardent well-wisher to the cause of freedom and improvement everywhere. To his faith he has been more than a martyr."

In another letter dated the 6th September the same lady wrote: "Just now my feelings are more cosmopolite than usual; I take a personal concern in a third quarter of the globe, since I have seen the excellent Rammohun Roy. I rejoice in the hope that you will see him some time, as he speaks of visiting your country, and to know you would be one of his first objects. He is indeed a glorious being,—a true sage, as it appears, with the genuine humility of character, and with the genuine sensibility, a more engaging tenderness of heart than any *class* of character can justly claim. He came to my house, at the suggestion of Dr. Boott, who accompanied him partly for the purpose of meeting Mrs. Joanna Baillie, and discussing with her the Arian tenets of her book. He mentioned the Sanscrit as the mother language of the Greek, and said the expressions of the New Testament most perplexing to a European, were familiar to an Oriental acquainted with this language and its derivations, and that to such a person the texts which were thought to support the doctrine for the pre-existence, bore quite another sense. She was a little alarmed at the erudition of her antagonist, and slipped out at last by telling him that his interpretations were too subtle for an unlearned person like herself. We then got him upon subjects more interesting to me—Hindu laws, especially those affecting women. He spoke of polygamy as a crime, said it was punishable by their law, except for certain causes, by a great fine; but the Mussulmans did not enforce the fine, and their example had corrupted Hindus; they were cruel to women, the

Hindus were forbidden all cruelty. Speaking of the abolition of widow-burning by Lord William Bentinck, he fervently exclaimed, 'May God *load* him with blessing!' His feeling for women in general, still more than the admiration he expressed of the mental accomplishments of English ladies, won our hearts. He mentioned his own mother, and in terms which convinced us of the falsehood of the shocking tale that she burned herself for his apostacy. It is his business here to ask two boons for his countrymen—trial by jury, and freedom for British capitalists to colonise amongst them. Should he fail in obtaining these he speaks of ending his days in America."

One venerable lady narrated an incident which took place in her house. Rammohun's sweetness is shewn in this story:

"At a small evening party at my house in Grenville Street, principally to meet the Rajah, he referred to the doctrine of original sin, in a way that startled a lady of the low church, a very charming and amiable woman, who had brought her daughter. 'But surely 'sir', she exclaimed, 'you do believe in original sin?' He looked at her, and she blushed deeply. After a minute, he seemed to comprehend the whole, and very gently inclining, he said, 'I believe it is a doctrine, which, in many well-regulated minds has tended to promote humility, the first of Christian virtues; for my own part, I have never been able to see the evidence of it.'

"The next morning my sweet friend called to apologise for what she had said, and added that she had never seen or heard anything so beautiful as this in society."

A similar story is told how Rammohun resisted the attempts of the great socialist Robert Owen to his views.



This is from an account supplied by Mr. Recorder Hill:—

"I only met the Rajah Rammohun Roy, once in my life. It was at a dinner party given by Dr. Arnott. One of the guests was Robert Owen, who evinced a strong desire to bring over the Rajah to his socialistic opinions. He persevered with great earnestness; but the Rajah who seemed well acquainted with the subject, and who spoke our language in marvellous perfection, answered his arguments with consummate skill, until Robert somewhat lost his temper, a very rare occurrence which I never witnessed before. The defeat of the kind-hearted philanthropist was accomplished with great suavity on the part of his opponent."

Rammohun found friends almost in all circles as his interests were of a cosmopolitan nature. He had in him abundance of humane tenderness and appreciated not only religious and spiritual fervour but intellectual greatness and artistic genius. In Calcutta he used to attend parties and his house was the meeting-place of ladies and gentlemen of all tastes. We have already referred to a party given by him in which Fanny Parks was present. The guests were entertained by the exhibition of artistic dancing. In England he took delight in visiting theatres in the company of the Duke of Devonshire and other notabilities. He was introduced to a well known actress Fanny Kemble in the House of Mr. Basil Montagu. The lady was acquainted with Hindu drama but did not know Kalidas's *Sakuntala*. The Rajah sent her a copy of the translation by Sir William Jones, but unfortunately the English lady did not seem to feel the same admiration for it as did the Rajah. That Rammohun could talk to ladies in a delightful manner is told by Fanny Kemble. She has recorded in her *Reminiscences* about a meeting with the Rajah in the house of the Montagus:

"We presently began a delightful nonsense conversation, which lasted a considerable time, and amused me extremely. His appearance is very striking. His picturesque dress and colour make him, of course, a remarkable object in a London ballroom. His countenance, besides being very intellectual, has an expression of great sweetness and benignity." In the course of the conversation he could interchange persiflage to produce laughter.

Rammohun was very tender-hearted and had a great love for children. In Calcutta he used to play on the swing with children. The young boy Rajah Ram who accompanied him to England and who was brought up as his own son was an orphan child. He was picked up by a Civil Servant of the East India Company, Mr. Dick at Hardwar during a crowded fair. This boy was brought up by the Englishman, but when he went home on leave Rammohun agreed to take over the charge of this boy. Mr. Dick did not return to India and therefore the boy remained with Rammohun. He became a pet of the Rajah who would not feel offended even when he would jump over him. In England he placed this boy in charge of the Rev. Mr. Davison, and used to visit the family almost every week. The Davisons cherished great respect for Rammohun and called one of their sons Rammohun Roy, at whose christening the Rajah was present. Before he left London he went to see the child, and would prefer visiting Mrs. Davison in her nursery. "For surely never was there a man" writes Mrs. Davison, "of so much modesty and humility! I used to feel quite ashamed, of the reverential manner in which he behaved to me. Had I been our Queen I could not have been approached with more respect."

He possessed a fine sensibility and could at once enter into the heart of every body who came into contact with him. In spite of difference of opinion he always tried to maintain good relations with his parents

The members of his family could hardly appreciate his idealism, but he had nothing but kind feelings towards them. He never tried to convert anybody to his views by force. His main business was to enlighten the minds of others, and to develop them in such a way that they might choose for themselves their own course. He was jealous of personal freedom and "this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others," says William Adam, "even of those who differed most widely from him in religion and politics, and still more remarkably even of those whom the laws of nature and of society subjected to his undisputed control. He employed no direct means, no argument or authority, no expostulation or entreaty to turn his sons from the idolatrous practices and belief, in which they had been educated by the female members of his family and by the Brahman priests whom they consulted and followed. He gave them a good education; by his personal demeanour secured a place in their esteem and affection; set them an example by his life and writings; and then left them to the influence of idolatrous associations on the one hand, and to the unfettered reason on the other." His sons gradually came round to the views of their father, and associated themselves with the Brahma Samaj. But the idolatrous practices still continue in families of Rammohun's descendants. Religion in India is purely a personal affair and this is also the case in this instance. Although Rammohun's teachings have been neglected by his own kinsmen it is a matter of great rejoicing that they have been accepted by a large number of men and women who have kept his memory green.

### **Rammohun's Faith.**

A deep scholar and a keen dialectician as Rammohun was in the early life he is seen to indulge in

a thorough analysis of the religious systems he came across. As a rational thinker he had no sympathy with the superstitions and blind performance of rites. With advancing age the experiences of life led him to respect the feelings of others. From the very beginning he had realised unity through diversity and insisted upon the necessity of trying to understand the essential things and to distinguish them from the non-essential. When his heart yearned after true spiritual worth he found that in the midst of so-called paganism there burnt the fire of a desire to unite with the reality. He defended Hinduism against the attacks of ignorant Christian missionaries, and laid stress on the virtues of toleration.

He had widely studied the Moslem literature and owed a great deal to the teachings of Muhammad. He wrote his first tract in Arabic and Persian. But the attitude of his Moslem friends did not allow him to continue his exploration of the Muslim literature. He had, however, a great respect for the Prophet and the Muslim saints. In his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons he bore testimony to the excellent character of the Muslim judges and Muslim lawyers. His Hindu friends would not like him to be a member of the Hindu College on account of his association with the Muslims. The ridicule and contempt and some times calumny spread through malice did not dissuade him from his friendly relations with the people in whom he had perfect confidence. Even in the Brahma Samaj he employed Muslim musicians.

Born a Hindu he imbibed all the good things in the Hindu culture. He had all the virtues of a good Hindu, respectful, devout and charitable. He was a true Brahman as possessing the knowledge of Brahma the Supreme Being. Like a Brahman he considered it his mission to spread the knowledge of God and to serve humanity. Catholic in his views and broad in his sym-

pathies he did not like to curb the man in him by following the exclusive practices of his class. He saw his God worshipped everywhere, and felt that every human heart panted after the blessings of the Father in Heaven who could be approached by all when they were touched by the spirit of devotion and humility. The conception of God as one eternal being was reached by the ancient sages in India and by his studies in the Vedic literature Rammohun realised this grand conception. God to him was not an abstract being but an immanent personality making himself manifest everywhere and in every human being. When filled with this idea he was affected by the sufferings of his fellow-creatures. To love God was to serve the fellow-beings. It was God who dwelt in every heart and by trying to relieve the distress of others we but serve our God. The cries of the dying widows came to him as the anguish of God the tormented. He felt no rest so long as this cruel customs of burning the widows was permitted to exist. It was not religion that was responsible for this inhuman practice, but it was ignorance in some and avarice in others that helped the holocaust of the pure-hearted who were hardly able to defend themselves. Rammohun made the cause as his own and bore the cross on behalf of the weak and the distressed. It was not the task of the weak in faith. The rich and influential members of the orthodox party formed a strong league against him, but nothing daunted he worked for the emancipation of women with God overhead. He believed in the unbounded mercy of God and therefore he did not fear man. His religion was not confined to the profession of faith in certain scriptures or prophets, but it was the dedication of the life to the service of man and complete absorption in the thought of the Divine. The religion of the Bhagavat Gita and of the Bhagavat Puran found its fulfilment in him, for he could say with confidence: "Thou God, the ever-dwelling spirit in my heart, I shall

do whatever thou shalt direct." He felt the call within and would not deviate from his course inspite of the threats and frowns of others. He carried on his work almost single-handed. He never despaired of his mission for want of the support of others. Whatever he thought to be true and in the interests of mankind he pursued with unwearied devotion. He was not afraid of telling the truth, even if it was unpalatable. But he tried, as far as possible, to refrain from wounding the feelings of others.

A thorough-going Vedantist he found in the teachings of Jesus Christ a guidance to social and moral virtues. He presented to his fellow-countrymen the precepts as worthy to be followed in a religious life. The vanity of some Christian divines was wounded thereby, and this was the cause of a protracted literary controversy to no less pain to Rammohun. But in this controversy he never vilified his opponents nor used any harsh words. He called himself the humblest of men, but for that he never compromised truth. It is gratifying to note that the attitude towards Rammohun has considerably changed. At that time he received the approbation of the liberal Christians in Europe and America. They lent him all the moral and material support in his theistic movement. The *Christian Register* of Boston, U.S.A. very cordially approved of the development of the theistic movement on the Hindu lines and money was sent from both America and England for maintaining the Unitarian Committee. An American Unitarian Missionary Rev. Robert Loring, who visited India in 1926-27 contributed an article on "Rajah Rammohun Roy and the American Unitarians." (*Indian Messenger*, March 20 and 27, 1927). He reviewed the relations between the Rajah and the Unitarians from the contemporary literature available in Boston and wrote:

"The Boston Unitarian papers warmly defended Rammohun Roy and his friends against various attacks, both

in India and America, just as they would have defended one of their own Boston liberals.....The native reformed theistic movement in India and the reformed Unitarian Movement in America were felt to be in spirit one and the same." "The American liberals then, as now," further wrote the Rev Robert Loring, "did not share the orthodox zeal for missions, because they did not share the belief that the heathen needed a theological type of salvation.....They entirely agreed with Rammohun Roy when he spoke of 'common-sense in religion,' of 'practical' religion, and when he explained that he 'omitted certain doctrines of Christianity in his selection of verses from the Gospels, 'first, that they are subjects of disputes and contentions; secondly, that they are not essential to religion.' Neither Rammohun Roy nor the American Unitarians denied the value of speculation, of philosophy, or argument in religion, but both wished to *transfer the emphasise* in religion from theological salvation, to moral salvation, from church creeds to personal character, from speculative knowledge to ethical and social inspiration."

The Rev. Loring noted with pleasure that an ever increasing number of religious leaders have come over to the liberal position since the time of Rammohun Roy. An evidence of this was provided by the Rev. Dr. George Howells, late Principal of the Serampore College, who in the course of an address during the Centenary celebrations of the Brahma Samaj in 1928 said:

"When the distinguished founder of the Brahma Samaj, Raja Rammohun Roy, more than a century ago published a work entitled 'The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness' our Christian missionary friends were alarmed at the somewhat radical expression of the author's attitude to some of the doctrines of the Christian faith as then understood. But really the Raja was in this publication striking a blow that would in the

long run tell not against but on behalf of the Christian faith viewed from the standpoint of its primitive simplicity in the teaching and person of Jesus. He did pioneer work in compelling Christian thinkers and missionary teachers to go back to Jesus for the fundamentals of their theology, and to review once again in the light of spiritual experience and in the atmosphere of intellectual freedom, characteristic Christian doctrine, such as the Trinity in its relation to the Unity of God, the atonement, the incarnation, and the significance of the miraculous. Around all these Christian truths had gathered certain hard and fast dogmatic conceptions by no means helpful to a living religion devoted to human emancipation and redemption, on the basis of a world-wide mission. We may differ in our comparative estimate of the theological standpoint of the Raja and that of the Serampore pioneer, Dr. Marshman, in the controversy that arose between them on "The Precepts of Jesus" in the *Friend of India*, and in a series of theological articles and pamphlets but I think practically all Christian missionaries to-day will agree with me, in regarding Rammohun Roy as a genuine friend of Christianity and Christian progress in sending us back to Jesus himself for the foundations of our theology, and in insisting that a Christlike life is of infinitely more importance than adhesion to ancient theological dogmas difficult to reconcile with advancing knowledge, and to maintain in a spirit of loyalty to genuine intellectual freedom."

This estimate of Rammohun's contribution to the appreciation of Jesus is very opportune as it comes from the very place from where Dr. Marshman directed his attacks against Rammohun. Rammohun to-day stands vindicated. His attitude is now shared by a large circle of Christian thinkers. In making selections from the Gospels of the moral precepts of Jesus he tried to bring out the humane aspect of religion as distinct from the mysterious and miraculous and in this respect he was



doing what President Jefferson attempted in America and William Roscoe in England. Rammohun was genuinely interested in the moral and social virtues of Christianity. The way in which he approached Jesus appealed to many thoughtful Christians and he was welcomed in many Christian churches as one of them. On his death memorial services were held in many places of worship. Eloquent tributes were paid to his memory. Men like Dr. Lant Carpenter and the Rev. W. J. Fox held him in highest esteem. Sermons were also preached in Anglican and Presbyterian Churches. Five of these sermons were printed and in them the preachers reviewed the life and labours of Rammohun. It is no small testimony to his character, says Miss Collet, "that even a slight acquaintance with him was enough to stir stolid and phlegmatic Englishmen to something very nearly a passion of love for him. There must have been much love in the man to evoke such devotion." Christian friends very often discussed about his connection with Christianity. He was reported as if he had identified himself with their church and believed in some of the fundamental doctrines of their faith, viz. the divine authority of Christ, the resurrection, and miracles. It is no wonder that amidst Christians of great piety he was impressed by their character, and could not deny the influence that the Christian doctrines had upon them. But he never believed in any such doctrine for himself. According to his definite instructions his remains were interred in a solitary place so that no dispute could arise later on regarding his religious views. The best interpretation of his faith was given by the Rev. W. J. Fox in the funeral sermon in Finsbury Chapel, London. In the concluding portion of the loving tribute that he paid the preacher said: "We shall see his face no more! His presence has passed away as a poetic image fades from the brain! But it has left impressions which will long endure; influences of good, wide and

deep, here; yet wider and deeper in the distant land of his nativity. And, 'being dead, he yet speaketh' with a voice to which not only India but Europe and America will listen for generations. A few days of fever have made him dust. It appears that no skill could have saved a life which, as he was probably but in about the fifty-fifth (sixty-second) year of his age, seems to us prematurely terminated. Subsequent to all other signs of consciousness, he indicated the yet surviving sense of the kindness of his friends, and, by silent devotion of the presence of his God. His body will be silently committed to its rest in ground only hallowed by its reception—the noblest of all consecrations. Many will there be whom personal attachment will draw towards that spot, and it *should* draw them thither; for it is good to weep over the grave of such a man, and makes the heart better. Good will it be for them, there, to adopt as a rule of their own conduct his favourite quotation from the Persian poet, which he often wished should be inscribed on his tomb—'THE TRUE WAY OF SERVING GOD, IS TO DO GOOD TO MAN.'

"And if we shed at his death 'no faithless tears,' such is the service which the contemplation of his life will stimulate us to render. God is not served by our forms and ceremonies, our creeds and anathemas, our wild emotions, or our bustling zeal. He will have mercy, and not sacrifice. The garland with which the Hindu decks his idol is not less worthy heaven than the useless observances and mysterious dogmas, by the faith and practice of which many who are called Christians, have thought to propitiate God. The dissemination of knowledge, the mitigation of suffering, the prevention of oppression, the promotion of improvement, the diffusion of a beneficent piety,—these are God's work, for us, towards others; and they are all reflected upon ourselves in the building up of our own characters to intellectual and moral excellence. Speaking the truth in love, we

shall best bear our own testimony, and prolong theirs who have joined the cloud of witnesses' that compass us about, as we 'run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus.' The voice of duty may not call us to quit either country or kindred; but our souls have their pilgrimage of faith to pursue through varied trials, to our Father's house, in which there are many mansions, wherein ultimately shall be gathered together the whole family of heaven and earth. Already should our hearts feel the bond of that holy fraternity,—the love which never faileth, which never shall fail, in time or in eternity; for it is the essence and the influence of God, and 'he that loveth dwelleth in God, and God in him.' "

Mr. Estlin's venerable mother came to Stapleton Grove to be in the company of the Rajah for a few days. She was greatly impressed by his character and left notes about her reminiscences. She gathered the following particulars from Miss Hare in whose house the Rajah used to live in London. Mrs. Estlin writes: "The Rajah read the Scriptures daily in Hebrew and Greek. Miss Hare often read them to him also;—this was never omitted at night. He was also in a constant habit of prayer, and was not interrupted in this by her presence;—whether sitting or riding he was frequently in prayer. He told Miss H. that whenever an evil thought entered into his mind he prayed. She said, 'I do not believe you ever have an evil thought.' He answered, 'O yes, we are all liable to evil thoughts.' " What a humility for the great sage! In all his activities the motive force in him was the love of God. His theological studies or benevolent deeds were inspired by a deep desire to know God. "Amid all his wanderings" says Miss Collet, "Rammohun was saved by his faith. From the perfervid piety of his Pagan boyhood to the strong leanings which, in his latest years, he evinced towards Christianity he was led by his faith,—the purpose and passion of belief which he inherited from all the

ages of India's history. He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock; in a soil watered by new influences, and in an atmosphere charged with unwonted forcing power, but still a true scion of the old stock. The Rajah was no merely occidentalised Oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. Just as little was he, if we may use the term without offence, a spiritual Eurasian, if we follow the right line of his development we shall find that he leads the way from the Orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture, towards a civilization which is neither Western nor Eastern, but something vastly larger and nobler than both. He preserves continuity throughout, by virtue of his religion, which again supplied the motive force of his progressive movement. 'The power that connected and restrained, as well as widened and impelled, was religion.'

The Rajah is separated from us by a century. The thoughts he inspired, the ideals he upheld, the institutions he established, the associations he formed call us back to him at this distance of time. His work still remains unfulfilled, but his aspirations are now appealing to responsive hearts. We have not a worthy memorial to commemorate his services, but his faith in Universal Theism has awakened emotions in many a noble soul, who by their love and sacrifice have tried to bring the message of Rammohun home to his countrymen. May the spirit of Rammohun make us live in love and truth and serve God and humanity!



## APPENDIX A

### List of Books and Papers written by Rammohun Roy

#### PERSIAN

1. Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin, with an Introduction in Arabic, 1804.
2. Manazarat-ul-Adyan (no copy of the book has yet been traced).
3. Mirat-ul-Akhbar (Weekly Periodical, 1822-23).

#### BENGALI & SANSKRIT

1. Vedanta Grantha, 1815.
2. Vedanta Sara, 1816.
3. Talabkar Upanishad, 1816.
4. Isopanishad, 1816.
5. Kathopanishad, 1817.
6. Moondukopanishad, 1817.
7. Mandukya-Upanishad, 1817.
8. Bhattacharyer Sahit Vichar, 1817.
9. Sahamaran bishaye Prabartak O Nibartaker-Pratham Sambad, 1818.
10. Sahamaran Dwitiya Sambad, 1818.
11. Sahamaran Tritiya Pustak, 1829.
12. Gayatrir Artha, 1818.
13. Gayatrya Paramopashana Bidhanam (Sanskrit and Bengali), 1827.
14. Goswamir Sahit Vichar, 1818.
15. Subrahmanya Sastir Sahit Vichar (Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali), 1820.

16. Kavitararer Sahit Vichar, 1820.
17. Sambad Kaumudee (Weekly Periodical), 1821.
18. Brahman Sebadhee, (Nos, 1, 2, 3), 1821.
19. Padre O Sishya Sambad, 1821.
20. Chari Prasner Uttar, 1822
21. Pathya-Pradan, 1823.
22. Prarthana-Patra, 1823.
23. Brahmanishtha Grihasther Lakshan, 1826.
24. Kayasther Sahit Madyapan Bishayak Vichar, 1826.
25. Bajra-Soochee (Sanskrit and Bengali), 1827.
26. Brahma Sangeet, 1828.
27. Brahmopasana, 1828.
28. Anushthan, 1829
29. Gaudiya Vyakaran, 1833.
30. Kularnab Tantra (Sanskrit).
31. Kshudra Patree
32. Atmanatma Vivek (Sanskrit and Bengali).

*ENGLISH (Published in India).*

*The books marked with asterisks were  
also published in England.*

- \*1. An Abridgement of Vedanta (translation), 1816.
- \*2. Cena (Kena) Upanishad (translation), 1816.
- \*3. Ishopanishad (translation), 1816.
- \*4. Moondukopanishad (translation), 1819.
- \*5. Kuthopanishad (translation), 1819.
- \*6. A Defence of Hindu Theism, 1817.
- \*7. A Second Defence, 1817.
- \*8. A Conference between an advocate for, and an  
opponent of, the Practice of Burning Widows  
alive, 1818.
- \*9. A Second Conference, 1820.
- \*10. Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning  
of Widows, 1830.

11. Address to Lord William Bentinck, 1830.
12. Counter-Petition to the House of Commons to the Memorial of the advocates of the Suttee, 1831.
- \*13. An Apology for the pursuit of Final Beatitude, 1820.
- \*14. The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness, 1820.
- \*15. An Appeal to the Christian Public, 1820.
- \*16. Second Appeal, 1821.
- \*17. Final Appeal, 1823.
18. The Brahmuncal Magazine, Nos. 1,2,3,4 (1821-23).
19. A Vindication of the Incarnation of the Deity as the common basis of Hindooism and Christianity, 1823.
20. A Dialogue between the Missionary and three Chinese converts, 1823.
- \*21. The Prospects of Christianity in India, 1824.
22. Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in One True God, 1823.
23. Different Modes of Worship, 1824.
24. The Divine Worship (Gayatree translated), 1827.
25. Answer of a Hindoo to the question, "Why do you frequent a Unitarian place of worship?" 1828.
26. The Universal Religion, 1828.
27. The Trust Deed of the Brahma Samaj, 1830.
28. Petitions against the Press Regulations, 1823.
29. A Letter on English Education, 1823.
- \*30. Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females, 1822.
- \*31. Petition against the Regulation for the Resumption of Lakheraj lands, 1830.
- \*32. Rights of Hindoos over Ancestral Property, 1830
33. Letters on the Hindoo Law of Inheritance, 1830
34. Bengali Grammar, 1826.



*(Published in England)*

1. Abridgement of the Vedanta in 1816 and Keno-panishad, 1817 (with a preface by John Digby).
2. Final Appeal to the Christian Public, 1823.
3. The Precepts of Jesus with the First and Second Appeal, 1823.
4. The Prospects of Christianity, 1825.
5. Translations of Vedic Texts and other books, 1832.
6. Exposition of the Practical Operations of the Judicial and Revenue systems in India, 1832.
7. Translation of the Creed maintained by the Ancient Brahmins, 1833.

## APPENDIX B

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4. Works published in England, 1832.
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